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THE DEMAGOG

BY

WILLIAM RICHARD HEFFER



NEW YORK

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1904

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THE DEMAGOG

BY

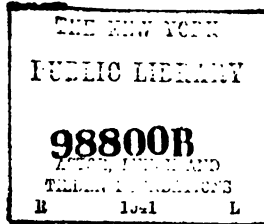
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NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1909

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TO
GEORGE E. REYNOLDS, ESQ.

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THE DEMAGOG

THE DEMAGOG

CHAPTER I

WHEREIN, FOR PURPOSES OF HIS OWN, DAVID
HOLMAN REVEALS HIS SECRET AMBITION

With the privilege of long intimacy Zaidee Gonzales sat irreverently on the highly polished flat-top desk in the inner office of David Holman where the editor and proprietor of the *Epoch* was wont to give the permanency of paper and ink to his weightiest thoughts, and swung her small arched foot defiantly.

"I hate her," she announced so emphatically that it negatived the sincerity she sought to place beyond question. The woman's full, smooth, red lips were pursed in the pout of a spoiled child; it was a sensuous, extravagant, heedless mouth—the kind of a mouth where a man's soul might be wrecked on the dangerous curves.

"Tut, tut, you don't even know her," Holman chided. It was not so much a reproof as an aggravation to continue.

"I hate her and her kind," Zaidee retorted. With the petulance of a little girl, but with all the grace of a pretty woman fully conscious of her many alluring charms, she flung a glance over her shoulder at the man seated at his desk. Holman, with secret pleasure, resigned himself to her mood, putting aside thoughts of work as impossible in her presence. Often he had baited her thus just to see that pout and frown.

"Look at her!" Zaidee held a copy of the latest edition of the *Epoch* spread open before her, and, pointing at the large portrait of a young woman of about her

own age, read scornfully: "‘Miss Harriet Stowers, the most popular member of New York society’s younger set, who has just declined to become a duchess.’"

Zaidee looked back at Holman, a personal injury reflected in her dark eyes. "I don’t see why you print such things," she challenged.

Holman smiled. "Because, though they distress you, they are what hundreds of thousands of other people like to read."

"Fools!"

"I am grateful to Miss Stowers," he tormented her, "for increasing the circulation of my papers among the less favored people."

"Zut!" Zaidee exclaimed impatiently, crumbling the offending newspaper and tossing it spitefully into a waste-basket.

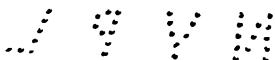
There was a knock and an office boy with a head as aureate as a cherub’s, appeared at the door. "Senator Forney to see you, sir," he announced.

Holman looked quickly at the girl. "You must go, Zaidee," he told her. It was a command, not a request.

"I won’t," asserted the young woman.

Holman ignored her mutinous refusal. "Tell Senator Forney I will see him in a moment," he directed the boy.

When the golden head had disappeared Holman rose from his desk. He was a giant among men, but so admirably proportioned that one thought of his figure as a standard rather than as an exception. Years spent under a sun that in March forces the thermometer up above one hundred degrees, Fahrenheit, had tanned his face until it had become nearly as dark as the faces of his Mexican miners. His eyes deep-set, were as gray as polished granite, but at times they seemed to soften into blue or deepen into black according to his humor. The forehead was broad and high and smooth, from which the black hair, inclined to wave, was kept back and, worn



rather long, made an effort to curl above the ears. It was an aquiline face made so by the prominence of the cheek-bones and the nose, high-arched and long and thin but perfectly formed; an easy face to caricature, a hard face to forget.

Coming behind the still recalcitrant girl, Holman caught her by the arms.

"You won't go?"

She shook her head.

"As your guardian I command you to obey me," and so saying he lifted her from the desk as if she had been a featherweight and stood before her with an exaggerated affectation of sternness.

"You are not my guardian. I am my own guardian," the young woman retorted, adjusting her skirts so that no fold fell wrong. She was as dark as Holman, but underlying her swarthiness was an olive and rose that told of Spanish blood, no mere accident of climate to be acquired or effaced in one generation. She was tall, too, but Holman's height as he stood by her side caused her to appear less tall than she really was. Her black eyes opposed his and she lifted her full chin high in defiance so that her neck, round as a column, smooth as brass, shone through the open spaces of her lace collar. "Two years ago you might have threatened me, but,—now I am twenty-three—"

"Twenty-two," Holman corrected.

"Nearly twenty-three," she insisted, "and my own guardian."

"At least," he argued, "I am still the guardian of your property; so, beware!"

He shook his finger at her as an awful warning and Zaidee, coaxed into smiling, started to the door, swinging her body slowly as if she would exasperate him into an injunction to hasten. But Holman merely smiled, the straight lips parting until they showed his strong, even teeth.

"Take your time," he admonished. "Senator Forney can wait."

She turned on him. "I hate this Senator Forney! What right has he to drive me away?"

"You hate the world in general on this beautiful day, it would seem."

"And you included," she confirmed, the curving mouth in a pout again.

He strode toward her quickly and laid his hand on her shoulder. "If I can run away this afternoon I'll make you confess you're sorry for that statement," he said to her gently, his eyes fastened on her face in admiration. "That is my final threat; wait at the house for me." He took his hand from her shoulder and opened the door. "Here, go through Mr. Fernald's room." Standing with his hand on the knob he watched her as, with an air of dignity still suffering from a slight, she walked away.

As Holman closed the door and went again to his desk the bright little light of comedy that had danced furtively on the hard steel of the man's real self, vanished before the sterner business at hand. There was left no trace of gentleness; all softness had gone. He was the master stamping his seal on the softer metal of other men. Even in his brighter moments the line of his mouth never departed from its straightness; the chin never lost its squareness; even in laughing, and seldom his smile reached the climax of a laugh, the strong teeth seemed always to be set.

Holman touched the button of an electric bell, and, with a jack-in-the-box nimbleness, his office-boy appeared.

"Xavier, tell Senator Forney I am ready to receive him," commanded Holman. The door closed behind the jack-in-the-box to reopen almost immediately and Mr. Forney entered, bowing as he advanced.

The Senator came forward pompously, wiping from

his red forehead perspiration induced by the unusual heat of the March day and the excitement attendant upon his mission. Holman rose from his desk and shook hands. "Have a seat, Senator," he invited. The politician sank into a chair, breathing heavily. His eyes were round and aqueous, and sometimes vacuous. He was fighting unskilfully and unsuccessfully the battle against decay.

Holman was the first to speak. "You've thought over our conversation of yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"It can't be done, Dave," Forney shot forward his heavy lower jaw as he delivered the ultimatum. "It can't be done," he repeated.

He watched the face of the younger man eagerly, but Holman gave no sign that he had heard. He was engaged in balancing thoughtfully on the forefinger of his left hand a bronze paper-knife so heavy that, but for the ornamentation, it might have been mistaken for a weapon. On the handle was wrought the figure of a little boy in the costume of a fisherman, the wistful face, exquisitely carved in ivory, peering from under the tarpaulin hood with the deep gaze of those who look out upon the sea.

Forney had endeavored to give finality to his words but he was unpleasantly aware that they lacked force and the realization angered him. With difficulty he preserved an appearance of calm, hiding his rage that his opinion should make so slight an impression on the man he was addressing. He brushed a heavy hand over his thin gray hair.

"No, it can't be done, Holman," he said again, his voice rising combatively. But the man at the desk continued imperturbably his study of the ivory face of the little fisher-boy and gave no heed. It was a studious assumption of indifference that smacked of insult.

On Forney's forehead the sweat started afresh. He

The Demagog

tuck his cigar between his teeth and bit on it savagely. Instinctively his hands clenched as if the contest he saw approaching were to be physical.

"It can't be done, I say." This time he almost shouted it. He paused for a second and, still gaining no response, added angrily: "Damn it, can't you answer?"

At the oath David Holman put aside the paper-knife and looked up quickly. He raised his gray eyes coldly, holding them level with the eyes of the other until the wrathful gaze was averted. Then he picked up the paper-knife again. He would beat down this weak reminiscence of a man as remorselessly as the inconsistent Puritans beat down the Indians who thwarted the advance of their new religion. It was the way the world progressed.

"I beg pardon," he said, addressing the little fisher-boy rather than the former Senator. "I wasn't paying close attention." His eyes, as hard as marble, again sought Forney's face. "You were saying, I believe, that it cannot be done." He spoke slowly, uttering each word with a metallic distinctness. "It can be done. It must be done, and you are the man, Forney, I am sure, who will help to do it. Now, I don't intend to argue; the time for argument has passed. Besides you and I never had but one argument——" He waited to be sure that the old wound opened. "It has to be done, Forney. I'll show you just how it is going to be done and how you are to help. Then, if it isn't done——" He saw the politician's florid face grow suddenly ashy. The man's glance fell away from his own, the clenched hand loosened and Holman turned to the brighter side of the picture, watching Forney to meet the eyes that he knew would be again raised, suppliant and grateful, for the best, the man was but a servitor, dependent on him. "If it is done, Forney, you might be senator again. You are not such a senator as you were before, you understand, *not sure of your job*; scared here in New York,

Holman Reveals His Ambition

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Washington and scared to death in Albany, but a senator with a following—with my following.” Senator Forney’s eyelids narrowed greedily. The prospect was alluring, for he had come to believe that there was no promise David Holman could not fulfill; the object of his desire that he might not obtain. Once he had dared to treat Holman contemptuously and he was not likely to forget it; it was the “argument” to which Holman had referred and it had ended Forney’s defeat for the senatorship. Holman, then new to politics, was asserting his power for the first time and Forney, in opposing him, had been merely following what he had believed to be the judgment of Jerry McQuade, the Boss, whom he feared, and James O’Malley, the District Attorney, whom he respected, but he had made the mistake of many imitators, exaggerating the attitude of his models, and had converted their indifferent neutrality into open hostility. There had come the surprise from which Mr. Forney’s memory had never recovered. Holman, by the use of money and his newspapers, had turned the Senator out of office, as it were, over night, relegating him to private life and an unattractive law-practice just when he had settled himself comfortably into a public career of ease and importance. It was a hard lesson to learn, and it had come at an age when learning is arduous, but Wade Forney had learned it. Two weeks after the legislature had elected his successor, old supporters explicitly veering to Holman’s candidate, Forney had asked the proprietor of the *Epoch* to make his peace, and ever since then he had maintained a respect amounting to awe for this confident young man who realized so well the purchasing power of ready cash. And now, when the prize aimed at was a dizzy mark, even for Holman’s towering ambition, the former Senator had no intention of holding to his ultimatum to the point of a clash.

"I don't believe it can be done, Dave," Forney qualified, humbly. He was the only man who addressed Holman by his first name. It was an assumption of intimacy on the part of Mr. Forney, however, that carried no conviction.

"And why?" The question came perfunctorily from Holman.

"Because—because," Forney stammered, "there isn't time. Here we are, well along in March and the convention meets the last of June, just a little over three months—the time's too short."

Holman's gray eyes softened to blue; the eagle in him surrendered to the dove as he rose and went to where Forney sat, laying his hand in comradeship on the older man's shoulder, for though he was of steel he could bend when he wished and he could soften when it suited his purpose.

"And I thought you knew me," he said in mild reproach. "Do you suppose I am beginning this now? Do you imagine that I have just thought of it?"

"Of course not; of course not," Forney interposed hastily.

"Of course not," Holman agreed. "I should not have broached the matter to you or to anyone else if I were not very sure where I stand. And I tell you, Forney, now, that, if I go after it, as I expect to, I shall get the nomination for the presidency and I shall be elected."

Mr. Forney, remembering his lost senatorship, believed him, but, unwilling to commit himself, was silent.

"Now, are there any other objections you may have?" Holman asked with formal, almost ironic, politeness.

"Don't call them objections, Dave," the politician corrected. "They are not objections, but I can't see how it can be done. From present appearances Abner J. Heyward can control the convention, hands down. He's got a lot of delegates instructed for him already and others are the same as pledged because he has been the only

man in sight. It might have been all right some time ago and I'm not saying it won't be all right four years from now, but, at present, Heyward has it all his own way. He will be nominated on the first ballot. Why didn't you say something sooner? Then I could have pitched in and helped and, may be, it could have been arranged."

"I want no ifs and buts and might-have-beens," Holman snapped him up unfeelingly. "This thing has got to be done and it will be done. You have never heard yet of my making a prophecy that wasn't fulfilled. I don't prophesy until I know." Forney, who in his time could brow-beat men, sat with averted eyes. Holman knew that his own words carried conviction through the fear he inspired in the worn-out politician, but there were others to be reached through Forney who would ask for something more.

"Senator," continued Holman solemnly and not unkindly, "here's something for yourself, and for yourself alone. I want to share a secret with you. Don't go to McQuade with it; don't breathe it to a soul. Keep it to yourself. Can I trust you?"

"Of course," Forney made haste to answer.

"Of course," Holman assented. "I knew I could; only it's important, vitally important, and I want to impress upon you the necessity of keeping it between ourselves. You are the only man I'd tell it to and I tell it to you because, well, I may have done you an injury and I am anxious to repair it, and now, if you work with me, I can help you to get back what I caused you to lose."

Senator Forney nodded his head. "You can trust me not to say anything," he asserted.

"Well, then, this is it: Heyward, on the day the convention meets, will withdraw from the race and recommend that his delegates vote for me. I can count on most, if not all of them."

Forney caught his breath in a low whistle.

"Hell!" he blurted out, "How much did it cost?"

"Your evil associations, Forney, your evil associations," Holman smiled good-naturedly. "Mr. Heyward will retire for the best interests of the Party and the good of the People, for Mr. Heyward is devoted to his Party and is a true friend of the People. No other considerations have been or will be necessary." He shed upon Mr. Forney the embracing, honest smile of a boy.

The politician attempted to reflect an appreciation of the most excellent joke, but he was exploding under the pressure of the stupendous news he had heard and his answering smile was forced. Holman returned to his desk, and, somewhat ostentatiously, read the address on an envelope that had been lying there. He lifted the envelope, scrutinized the writing closely and put it down again where it was plainly visible.

"I had a letter from Heyward yesterday," he informed his visitor. "But you mustn't say so; not a word now; remember."

He touched a button and, almost simultaneously, his office-boy appeared.

"Xavier, has Mr. Ellison come in?" Holman asked.

"Yes, sir." The boy bobbed his yellow head.

Holman turned to Mr. Forney. "Wait here, Senator," he said. "I'll be back in a few minutes. You can be thinking over what I've told you; that would keep a few minds busy for some weeks if they knew, eh?" And raising his brows slightly, he passed out of the room, the boy holding open the door for him, closing it behind him carefully.

"Don't let anyone enter, Xavier; no one," cautioned Holman when the door had closed. He crossed the ante-room rapidly and entered the office of his managing editor.

Senator Forney, left to his own devices, took a fresh cigar from his pocket and, cutting off the end thoughtfully, lighted it. He stood, searching for a receptacle

for the burned match, and, failing to find anything more suitable, dropped the charred stick on the rug. He threw back his head and blew, with evident relief, a pompous cloud of smoke into the room. Mr. Forney was never more important than when alone. He thrust his hands behind him and walked up and down with an air of proprietorship, gazing condescendingly at a tapestry of Flemish work that covered nearly the entire wall at the end of the room. Mr. Forney didn't care for tapestries; he doubted if anyone really did; it was just a fad. Between puffs of tobacco smoke the former Senator surveyed the room leisurely. Its luxury impressed him. He persuaded himself that this inner office of the proprietor of the *Epoch* was not nearly so gorgeous as the offices of many other wealthy men he knew, although Holman had more money than a dozen of them put together. There was something too showy in these other places; here it was more—refined; Forney hit upon the word happily. It was this quality of refinement, he told himself, that distinguished Holman from these other men he had in mind who had also made their fortunes quickly. He strolled over to a small painting and looked at it critically. It bore an inscription on a gilt plate: François Boucher 1703-1770. Mr. Forney didn't care for pictures. Upon a mahogany book-case was a massive silver vase and the politician came closer to read the inscription, floridly engraved: "To David Holman, Our Representative in Congress, from his Constituents of the —th Ward." Mr. Forney turned away grimly; he had cause to remember that campaign.

Continuing his inspection, the former Senator regarded the windows that gave on the street and his face lighted up as if he had, at last, discovered the secret that had baffled him. From top to bottom the windows were of stained glass and the light filtered in through deep red, purple, blue or rose and, harmonious and soft, pervaded the room. The effect was beautiful, Mr. Forney

admitted, somewhat reluctantly, but he persuaded himself that he had seen much more imposing stained glass in churches.

In a distant corner of the room, half-hidden in shadow, a cartoon caught Mr. Forney's eyes. He went close to it. Here was something he could truly appreciate; it was more in his line, he explained to himself. The artist had depicted Holman—it required a good artist to catch such an excellent likeness, the former Senator reflected—as a knight in armor with two plumes waving from his helmet, on one of which was printed: Truth; and, on the other: *The New York Epoch*. In front of Holman, pierced by a lance in Holman's hand, was a dragon, labelled: Predatory Wealth, which had been arrested in the very act of destroying an unfortunate man wearing a mason's cap on which were the words: The People. Senator Forney liked this; he considered it strong and convincing. He studied the commanding features; yes, the likeness was remarkable; it was the face of a conqueror. He wondered if now, in the supreme test, Holman would conquer as he had conquered before. Anything was possible to a man who could calmly announce that Abner J. Heyward, the party's leader—"Honest Abner"—had sold out to him; no other phrase than "sold out" occurred to the mind of the former Senator. What a sensation that announcement would make! Puffs of smoke ascended rapidly from Forney's lips like steam escaping from his pent excitement. He began to pace the room nervously. At his first turn his glance was arrested by Holman's substantial desk, the polished flat top reflecting the colored lights that the early afternoon sun cast through the stained glass. There was a large blotting pad in a leather casing and upon it and near it were a few letters and papers. Mr. Forney remembered Holman had left Heyward's letter lying there on the desk. He drew nearer. His eyes strained themselves in searching, from

a distance, among the papers. He put on his glasses. Presently he saw it, somewhat apart from the others. The familiarity of the handwriting startled him; it was the well-known heavy, sprawling penmanship of Abner Heyward. He cast a hurried look about the room and caught up the letter. The postmark was of Cincinnati, Heyward's home. With this documentary confirmation of the news he had just heard he could arm himself for a campaign on his own account. He debated whether he should risk reading the letter. A noise at the door determined him. He replaced the envelope quickly on the desk and was walking away from it when the door opened and Holman entered.

"Sorry to have kept you waiting, Senator." Holman ignored the slight confusion of his visitor. "I hope you have been looking at the pictures." He waved his hand toward the walls. "Here is one I want you to see." He led the way to the small painting that had a place apart. "It is a Boucher and I am very proud of it. I paid fourteen thousand dollars for that."

Boucher's worth leaped upward in Mr. Forney's estimation. "It's a good deal for such a little picture," he said, gazing at it critically above his glasses. "I don't know much about the old masters; had to work too hard when I was a boy to go in very deep for art, and I have never found the time since." He was glad his precipitate retreat from the desk had not been observed.

Holman stood in admiration before the landscape with its sleeping shepherdess in the foreground: a princess who was only playing at being a shepherdess and only pretending to be asleep, as the cavalier, peeping at her from behind the thick chestnut trees, well knew.

"This is the way they played, these butterfly-grasshopper people," he explained, "in the very shadow of the French revolution. It shows how people play even with the fires of the volcano under them. That's why I like it."

Holman went to his desk, stooping on his way to pick the charred match from the rug; he was fastidiously neat. As he observed the changed position of Heyward's letter a spark so small that it escaped the notice of his visitor shone in Holman's eyes. Turning abruptly to Forney he asked: "Can you come to see me next week?"

"Next week? What day?" Mr. Forney feigned a search for previous engagements, but Holman knew, as well as he, that he would allow no other claims to interfere with such an appointment.

"A week from day after to-morrow, Friday."

"Friday week; yes, I guess I can come."

"I want you to be sure about it."

"Yes, I'll come."

"That's good. You will have a week to think it all over. Friday, a week from day after to-morrow, then; here, at this hour." He took out his watch. "Two o'clock."

"Friday week, two o'clock," assented Mr. Forney. He took up his hat and Holman followed him to the door. With his hand on the knob, Holman repeated: "All right, it's settled then; Friday, two o'clock, and, mind, say nothing to McQuade."

Mr. Forney departed, nodding his head sagaciously.

Upon Holman's features as he reseated himself at his desk there rested the cold, victorious sneer of a cynic who sees his pessimism justified. He opened Heyward's letter and, with the air of a conjurer, took from it a sheet of paper. It was blank. His distrust of Forney had made him safeguard Heyward's harmless, formal communication. The envelope had served his purpose; the letter would have revealed the trick.

He rang and Xavier appeared.

"Tell Mr. Fernald that I wish to see him." The boy was about to depart when Holman called him back. "This is baseball weather, Xavier; they will soon begin

playing at the Polo Grounds. You mustn't forget to speak to me about a season ticket."

He looked at the boy in a fellowship of understanding and Xavier's grin spread back from his widely separated teeth, over his nose and to the corners of his outstanding ears. It was such exhibitions of democratic sympathy that had made him Holman's idolatrous slave ever since the "Chief"—it was the office title for Holman—had taken him from the post of copy-boy to do service in his private office. His name was Francis Xavier Mulvane and, until Holman, in the enthusiasm of discovery, had, by example decreed that he should henceforward be known as Xavier, the boy had been called by the more congruous name of Frank.

"Tell Mr. Fernald that I wish to see him," Holman directed again just when Xavier's grin was expanding to the point of utterance. The boy departed, scurrying, as was his habit when on a mission for the "Chief."

Holman was pleased with the lie and the trick that had bewildered Wade Forney. It was a campaign lie, a political trick; both common enough among those eager to serve the People. He again took up Heyward's empty envelope. "I think that will do the work," he mused.

Fernald entered with a book in his hand. He was a tall man, not yet arrived at middle age, but with an habitual air of preoccupation, a stoop, a frown and a carelessness of dress which made him appear older than he was. At times he seemed an athlete gone to seed, his superb physical possibilities sacrificed to midnight candles. His high forehead was mapped with faint lines and there were deltas of wrinkles at the corners of his eyes. His clothes hung loosely on him and the sleeves of his coat were too short, emphasizing the length of his arms and attracting attention to his hands. His arms were those of a fighter, supple and of great reach; the hands were slender but powerful, with long fingers, white and well-cared for. His right hand held a heavy book

with the forefinger caught at the page where Holman's summons had interrupted him.

"Fernald," Holman began, "I've determined to give you a chance I know you've wished for and waited for; I want you to write an editorial praising Abner J. Heyward. You've always had a strong liking for Heyward and have tried to persuade me to share your enthusiasm. Perhaps you are right; at any rate it will not do any harm to praise him a little; not too much, you know, and don't commit us in any way; just something pleasant. I'll look it over before it goes into the paper." Such an editorial would serve to corroborate the news Holman felt sure Forney would spread.

Fernald's soft brown eyes grew bright as Holman spoke. His forefinger slipped from the book he had been reading. He was a star-gazer, a dreamer with enthusiasm always at his finger-tips and now he spoke warmly, punctuating his speech with short, convincing gestures.

"Abner Heyward, in my opinion," the editorial writer maintained, "is the hope of the Party and of the People, in the coming campaign. He stands for those things you stand for; his avowed principles are those you have persistently advocated, although, perhaps, he does not carry them as far as we wish. There is only one other man who could do what he has done and is doing, and that man is yourself, Mr. Holman. And *you'll* not run."

"Yes, that *had* been my intention," responded Holman slowly; he emphasized the tense, watching keenly the effect of his words. Here was another man to be played more adroitly than he had played Forney, but with the same sureness of result, for Fernald was already fast on the line. "That had been my intention, but suppose, Fernald, I should decide, after all, to make the sacrifice of time and money and give my services to the people as their candidate."

The fire of the visionary that smouldered always in Fernald's eyes, leaped into flame. "Your time and your

money could not be devoted to better purpose. Though you should spend the last cent of your tremendous fortune, I am sure you would never regret it."

Time and again the editorial writer had held up to Holman the possibilities of personal missionary work among the political pagans, his persistence supported by the cherished belief that, on the eve of another memorable campaign, it had been his pleading that had persuaded Holman to become a candidate for Congress. And it was his fondest thought that the speeches he had then made had helped, in no small measure, toward victory. When that campaign came to its triumphant end the memory of those speeches remained with him, a lasting intoxicant. The majority that sent Holman to Congress was the largest ever recorded in the district and from that time Fernald had not ceased to urge upon his Chief the contemplation of greater things, but Holman had insisted that he was without political ambition.

As Fernald went earnestly over the old arguments Holman rose. He walked back and forth listening to the pleasant flattery pouring from Fernald's perfect faith. He paused, and, resting one hand on his desk, stood before his disciple. His hand came in contact with the paper-knife and, picking it up, he regarded the small ivory face as if it had been a talisman, seeming to find there the answer to whatever problems perplexed him, for he strode to Fernald and, tapping the shoulder of the editorial writer with the bronze knife,—it might have been the accolade, conferring knighthood on this dreamer of chivalric political dreams—said gravely:

"Fernald, you almost convince me that it would be best." He broke suddenly into a light laugh. "And, therefore," he added, "don't commit yourself irrevocably to our esteemed friend, Mr. Heyward, when you praise him to-morrow. Generalities, Fernald, generalities; there is nothing safer than generalities and I can always trust you to make them glittering."

Under that encouraging glance the receptive Fernald expanded as a flower opens to the sun. "Oh, if you only would enter the field!" he exclaimed. "We could swing the country; I am sure of it. The revolution that you preach and that you permit me to preach in your columns, is here. The People are rising against the Goliath of Greed. All they are waiting for is a David to lead them." He bent upon Holman a look of inspiration.

Holman smiled. "And the David, you think, is David Holman?"

"You have spoken, as the Hebrew has it," Fernald replied simply.

"Ah, Fernald, if only McQuade and a few others of the Political Omnipotents were of your faith, we might, indeed move mountains."

A frown clouded the face of the editorial writer. The dreamer gave way to the warrior, for the two were strangely commingled in him. "McQuade and his kind must be fought," he declared. "They must be whipped into line or—exterminated. There must never be any compromise with such enemies of the Republic. They are not less Powers that Prey because they prey in the name of their Party and seek to make a virtue of dividing the spoils."

Fernald passed his long sinewy fingers through his tawny hair as through a mane and, throwing back his broad shoulders, stood as staunch and defiant as a gladiator. To Holman, watching intently this display of enthusiasm, his words were as wine.

There was a timid, hesitating knock at the door, and, in response to Holman's sharp: "Come in"—an invitation that plainly betrayed annoyance, Arthur Ellison, the city editor, opened the door and shut it softly after him. He was a quiet little man, worn with work, who had a way of slipping into places unobserved. He gave the impression of having slipped into life without having caused anyone much trouble and, probably, he would

slip out again even more quietly. Faithful to the men who worked with him and faithful to the man who employed him, he had mummified himself in Holman's service, rewarded for his toil by faint and infrequent praise. The city editor came noiselessly to the desk and spoke in the low monotone habitual to him.

"I have just learned from one of our society reporters," he said, "that young Austin Pemberton gave a dinner a few evenings ago to which the women came in costumes of butterflies and the men as grasshoppers, and thousands of butterflies brought from South America were turned loose during the dinner and flew about the room. Mrs. Van Alstyne was there and Miss Harriet Stowers and others of their set. We have portraits of nearly every one of those at the dinner, and I have a good description of some of the costumes from which the artists can get up striking pictures. I suppose you will want a display made of it?"

Fernald, before Ellison had ceased speaking, had gone into his office which adjoined that of his Chief and had closed the door. The actualities of newspaper work; the getting and printing of news, particularly that relating to personalities, was distasteful to him.

Holman did not respond immediately to Ellison's question. "Did you send the two men to follow Senator Forney?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," Ellison answered, "Riefsnider and Redmond."

Holman scowled. "I wish you had sent others. Riefsnider knows too much. He is always too cock-sure he is right. You should have sent other men to follow Forney. It is highly important. You told them never to lose sight of him? If they need relief one of them can telephone while the other watches, but I want that man followed, night and day, for at least twenty-four hours, every minute, and, after that, I'll give you other instructions. I want to know everywhere he goes and everything he does."

"Riefsnider and Redmond will find that out, sir, I am sure," Ellison answered mildly. He never lost an opportunity to defend his men. Holman had expressed his approval of both reporters on more than one occasion, and Ellison deduced correctly that his employer's present criticisms veiled a complaint—against himself, probably, he surmised, for interrupting the conversation with Fernald. He turned and was on his way to the door when Holman recalled the original subject of conversation.

"Oh, about that dinner of Mr. Pemberton's," he said, and Ellison came softly back. "I wish you to make no mention of it." He paused, but the city editor manifested no surprise; long habit had set his face in a mask of impassivity. "By the way, Mr. Ellison," Holman continued, "I wish that you would see that nothing that could offend Mrs. Van Alstyne goes into the paper. Any mention of her is to be complimentary. And let the same thing apply to young Mr. Pemberton and, whenever an opportunity, a legitimate opportunity, you understand, occurs in the news, mention favorably the make of automobile he is booming; you know what it is, the Merault, isn't it? You can have it done discreetly. There is no necessity of a formal order, but you can let it be known in the office that I wish the *Epoch* to treat Mrs. Van Alstyne and Mr. Pemberton pleasantly."

"The society bee, at last," was Ellison's mental comment as he made note of the order. Austin Pemberton was Society's latest protégé or, more accurately, the favorite of that small but powerful group dominated by Mrs. Roswell Van Alstyne. He was a young Southerner of sharp wits and good family who, it was generally known, accepted a large salary for presenting to the attention of his fashionable friends a foreign make of automobile, and, it was hinted, added to this income by introducing those with social ambition and cash into circles that, without such purchased aid, they could not enter.

Holman Reveals His Ambition 21

"That's all," Holman announced curtly. The city editor let himself out of the room, twisting Xavier's ear good-humoredly as he passed. They were friends of long standing.

"I suppose you'd like to be out playing ball in this warm sunshine," the city editor remarked. Xavier grinned; it was sufficient reply and Ellison passed on into the city room. "So the Chief is going to climb into Society," he reflected. "It's strange how they all want to."

Holman, left alone, closed his eyes to his surroundings and reviewed the events of the day. It was his habit to engrave upon his memory in this manner important episodes in his career and he regarded this day as important. Apparently events were now shaping themselves according to his desire. It was a hazardous undertaking; treachery was on every side and must be guarded against by oblique methods; it were well to proceed cautiously. He was satisfied that Forney would go to McQuade with the news, casting suspicion upon Heyward, and that was what he most wanted.

Sitting there, with eyes shut to outward things, David Holman wove the fabric of his life's ambition. And to many a soul learning the lessons of altruism that the centuries are slowly teaching, the web that he fashioned without compunction would have appeared tragically cruel. For the warp was Self and the woof the Lust for Power. He had bent men to his will in the past; he would bend them further. Those that opposed he would break. Upon the hearts and souls and bodies of men and women he would stand with an iron heel; they should be as steps upon which he climbed upward to his goal, for that was the way of earth's conquerors since the world began. Nothing should thwart him. Neither conscience nor consideration for others should be allowed to stand in his way. Individuals, friends and foes, should be made to yield to his power. The great

formless mass of the People, the toiling citizens of a nominally free republic of whom he preached and whom he professed to love, should be made to serve his purpose. He would take their strength and exploit it for his own ends as, in an earlier day, the traders from Africa exploited the strength of the slaves they captured. With all the skill of a master-builder he had long ago laid the foundations for his hopes; with all the patience of a poet he had waited for the castle he would rear thereon. Consistently he had masked his ambition; faithfully, intelligently, fearlessly he had devoted himself to the cause of the Weak who were really the Strong. He would be the leader of the countless hosts who had become the slaves of a few usurpers nor should they ever know that, in shaking off the old familiar yoke, they were bending their necks to him and merely exchanging one servitude for another. Men, women and children! Children, by some strange inconsistency, he cared for; they should live in a land where liberty was real. Men were made to be moulded into useful shape by those who could fashion the weaker clay. Women—no woman could claim mastery over him. There were but two within the pattern of his dream; one he could discard lightly when his fancy pleased; the other as yet so shadowy and indistinct, that——

Holman opened his eyes and, bending slowly, lifted from where Zaidee Gonzales had thrown it the copy of the *Epoch* containing the portrait of Miss Harriet Stowers. The paper was still open at the offending page, and Holman smoothed out the creases as he spread it carefully on his desk. Impassively, critically he regarded the girl's face. In spite of the processes of enlargement and fast-printing suffered by the original portrait, it was a beautiful face, poetical in its general effect even as it then appeared, with nobility of soul speaking through the frank eyes and sweetness and gentleness of character indicated in the large mouth. With a pencil Holman,

as he mused, traced lightly the regular features, pondering upon the one uncertain phase of his future they suggested. If he could ally himself by marriage to a woman who held the high place Harriet Stowers held in the esteem of all people and whose important family connections and great wealth would bring him added influence how much wider would become his horizon. He would then be, not merely the leader of the masses, but one of that small group of men and women set by chance of birth and fortune above the rest of humanity, ruling after their own fashion. They now, he knew, tacitly opposed him as he had openly opposed them, but, if once they admitted him as they would be forced to do with such a woman as Harriet Stowers as his wife, he would, in time, become their ruler as he intended to become the ruler of that mighty proletariat which they held as of small account. And they as well as the masses should help him unknowingly or because they could not prevent it, toward his goal of undisputed power. How surely then he could put to his own use the influence of Mrs. Van Alstyne, Miss Stowers' aunt, whose wish was law to the most conspicuous member of that small Wall Street band, an unholy hierarchy that governed the finance and, through finance, the political destinies of the country. He expected Pemberton soon to present him to this much-abused but greatly-feared Mrs. Van Alstyne. He had paid Pemberton for that purpose. But an introduction might not suffice. It were surer to bring Mrs. Van Alstyne to do his will through her niece. The dream dazzled Holman. It thrilled him as he was rarely thrilled to contemplate marriage with a girl whose hand had been sought by men with honored names, proud position or great wealth to lend brilliance to their offers. Could he win where younger men had failed? Could the high place he was striving for be greater inducement than a dukedom? Could he gain the mastery of her love as he had gained the mastery over men by un-

swerving, devoted effort that would not brook failure!

As his day-dream hardened into purpose Holman idly, mechanically marked on the paper before him, not aware that the pencil he had taken up was one of the red crayons he habitually used in his editorial work. He scratched straight lines that fell upon the white space of the forehead. Gradually the markings took definite shape. They formed in red his own initials: D. H. One might have seen in the unconscious act an omen. It was as if the man had branded the girl with his own name.

Resolutely Holman put aside the newspaper and, lifting the receiver of the telephone, asked for the District Attorney's office. "I wish to speak to Mr. O'Malley personally," he informed the person who received his message and, in a moment, he was in communication with the District Attorney.

"There is a matter I would like to see you about if you can spare ten minutes, Mr. O'Malley," he said. "It should not take longer than that."

Holman nodded his head as he heard the response.

"Yes," he answered at once. "I shall be at your office in ten minutes, fifteen at the outside."

He hung up the receiver only to remove it again.

"Give me Madison Avenue," he ordered. The girl at the exchange board evidently recognized the cabalistic call, for in a moment an answer came.

"Is that you, Zaidee?" Holman inquired. "How would you like to take a run into the country, this beautiful afternoon?" He waited for the response. "Good!" he exclaimed. "And have Captain ready, too. I'll be up with the car in three-quarters of an hour."

Holman rapidly arranged his desk, putting away the letters, smiling as he locked Heyward's empty but valuable envelope securely in a drawer. He raised the paper-knife and looked at the ivory face of the fisher-boy.

"Captain," he said aloud, "I think we are coming into our own."

CHAPTER II

A FAIR OFFER IS MADE AND TAKEN UNDER CONSIDERATION

In ten minutes Holman was at the District Attorney's office. He never permitted himself to be late in keeping appointments, respecting time above all other things. Throughout his life he had made every hour count; prodigal with his exhaustless energy, but miserly with every minute. As a boy in Virginia he had acquired more knowledge by his studies after school hours than he had gained while in school, and, in addition, had so husbanded his leisure that he had accumulated a sum of money not inconsiderable before he turned his face westward. Among the prospectors and miners of the Arizona mountains his capacity to labor with great strength through the longest days developed into a by-word and when the men, prostrated by the killing days of toil, sought relief in dissipation, he turned with resources unsapped to his books, and, by candle-light worked with his mind as he had worked with his body in the burning sunlight of the mountains or in the cold darkness of the shaft or level. Although he had owned in part or entirely every mine in which he had worked he had shared the driving day's labor with the rest.

Holman walked into the District Attorney's office conscious of the attention he attracted, for in the life of the city he was a conspicuous and, to many, a romantic figure. His commanding presence, leonine in its general aspect, his dark impassive face and his arrow-straight gaze made him a man to be looked at in a crowd, looked at and admired for his rugged majesty. His very walk was impressive. He had a way of planting his feet, the

heels striking first, sharp and heavy as if sure of his ground.

Holman was not kept waiting but was ushered into Mr. O'Malley's private office as soon as he arrived. The District Attorney rose to greet him pleasantly but with a reserve that men rarely forgot in Holman's presence. The two men had served in Congress together, members of a determined but ineffective minority. They were of about the same age but, in character, as in appearance, totally unlike. O'Malley had the red hair and the light blue eyes of his ancestors; it is probable that at an earlier age he was freckled but now his complexion was ruddy with the rough red of a man in perfect health who takes plenty of out-door exercise. His smooth shaven face had a boyish appearance that had caused him to be referred to occasionally during his congressional career as the "boy-statesman" and the "boy-orator." Even now, when some newspaper objected to or was hit by a law that, with unsparing zeal, he enforced, it referred to the District Attorney as the "boy-reformer." O'Malley had served four terms in Congress and had risen to the chairmanship of important committees. When his party was in the minority he had fought stubbornly but fairly; when his party held the balance of power he was just and, at all times, considerate. Holman, during his one term in the lower house, had worked zealously with O'Malley but had kept always in the background, making his influence felt but declining to share in the glory brought by successful measures. When he had refused a renomination he went back to his newspapers, but O'Malley had continued, looming larger in national importance with every session. There was no man in either house, it was said, who did not like him and many regarded it as a mistake when he withdrew from Congress to become the District Attorney of New York. But O'Malley had seen abuses existing; he had witnessed with chagrin the maladministration of the District At-

torney's office and, with his election, had come such sweeping reforms, such sincere and impartial enforcing of neglected laws that the country at large became interested in his work. He was held up to other communities as a type of honesty and efficiency. Before his retirement from Congress he had been chosen a National Committeeman and it was due to him in great degree that the sentiment of the state was for Abner J. Heyward for president. This fact had been prominently in Holman's mind when he had telephoned and it was uppermost in his thoughts now as he advanced and gave his hand to the District Attorney.

"I shall not keep you ten minutes," he said as he took a seat.

"Then it can't be of grave importance," Mr. O'Malley responded smiling.

"But it is," corrected Holman. "It is of the very highest importance to me, but I don't ask or expect your answer until later when you have spent all the ten-minutes over it that you may think its consideration deserves."

"I am all attention." O'Malley's lips had closed over his wide, white teeth, but his eyes still held the smile.

"First, let me begin in my own way." Holman paused and Mr. O'Malley cleared his encumbered desk of some of the papers before him as if for action, and then, resting his elbow on the arranged space, bent forward to listen. "Your term of office, Mr. O'Malley, will expire soon. I do not know your plans and, of course, I have no right to inquire."

"I have not given great thought to the future," the District Attorney volunteered. "The present keeps me too occupied for that."

"Good!" exclaimed Holman, "for it is of the future that I wish to speak."

"You excite my curiosity." O'Malley had never before seen Holman in such a mood.

"That is what I wanted to do. Curiosity is a spur to the imagination and I want your imagination to picture for you, to visualize the possibilities in what I am about to suggest."

An attendant in uniform knocked, and opening the door, came to Mr. O'Malley's side and whispered to him. The District Attorney did not conceal his surprise. Holman caught the name of McQuade in the attendant's low communication and saw the brief ripple of astonishment that passed over the District Attorney's face.

"I will see him in a few minutes," he told the attendant aloud. The man was departing when Holman spoke.

"I said ten minutes over the 'phone, Mr. O'Malley," he interposed. "I shall keep within the time limit."

The man was nearing the door and O'Malley called after him. "Tell Mr. McQuade I shall see him in ten minutes."

Holman's eyes narrowed and darkened as they sought the District Attorney's face for O'Malley's reforms had hit hard at the old Boss who controlled the political destiny of his party in the state, but there was no trace of fear or concealment in the District Attorney's blue eyes as he met Holman's glance.

"I presume," O'Malley said, as if in answer to the suspicion Holman had not intended to betray, "that Mr. McQuade wishes to see me about the election fraud cases. With the cases in hand there is nothing to be done, but he can aid greatly in preventing such cases in the future, even as you are aiding, Mr. Holman, in giving to the offences a beneficial publicity."

O'Malley was an "organization man" and believed strictly in party lines. Throughout his political career he had worked with and for the great organization controlled by Jerry McQuade but no one had ever accused him of participating in or approving the darker methods of the Boss, and no one believed that political profit had

ever come to Emmet O'Malley from any of McQuade's suspected nefarious "deals."

"I am glad you said that," Holman returned briskly with hearty approval in his voice, "for it makes pertinent a thing I wished to say. In my papers and in public I have repeatedly commended your conduct of this office and I wish again to offer my congratulations."

"I appreciate that very deeply, Mr. Holman, and I appreciate also the valuable support your papers have given to the work I have been trying to do. Your aid has been timely and most helpful."

"I am pleased for your sake and for mine and because it is in keeping with what I came here to propose."

He paused, and Mr. O'Malley bowed courteously to him to proceed.

"I have come to ask you, Mr. O'Malley, to become, when your term of office expires, my personal attorney."

So unexpectedly came the offer that the District Attorney threw back his head in a little start of protest and opened his mouth as if to speak.

But Holman went on rapidly giving the other no time to reply. "I do not ask your answer now. I do not wish it and I beg that you will not permit yourself to come to an immediate conclusion. My interests have become manifold and large. I wish some one in whose judgment I have entire confidence, not to take care of the small or unimportant legal matters, but to advise me; to give me the benefit of their wise counsel. You have spoken of the assistance my papers have been in your public work. There are other instances innumerable of where they have aided in a similar manner, but they can become of greater power, of greater value to the community. Sometimes I am too close to see it well; I lose the perspective. I have followed your career with, if you will permit me to say so, the most cordial approval. You could continue that career or pursue your own private practice while acting as my adviser on the more

important matters. I mention these things to bring to you the possibilities in such a position."

Again Mr. O'Malley started to speak, but Holman did not permit the interruption. His dark face evidenced his concentration upon his theme; his deep voice poured out the words rapidly and earnestly.

"What I ask," he continued, "should not require all of your time or even half of it. I should not expect your opinion on the infinitude of small matters; what I ask and need is accurate, wise judgment in regard to questions of primary importance, questions that, because as you know, my newspapers have obtained a strong hold on the people, might affect the entire city or the state or even the nation. I would give fifty thousand dollars a year and gladly for your services in such an important place."

As unexpected as had been the offer to Mr. O'Malley, the amount of the retainer Holman promised was even more of a surprise. "Fifty thousand dollars," exclaimed O'Malley, "why, it's nearly as much as the president is paid!"

"Nearly as much as the president," Holman confirmed, "and with your private practice you could easily more than double it. I do not expect the amount to be much of an inducement. If it were I would willingly pay more. But what I do expect to influence your decision is the importance of such a place. In the way newspapers are regarded today a position of this nature would and should rank in its influence upon the community with a public office. There are possibilities almost unbounded in the newspapers of today, and you would be in the position of the man with his hand at the throttle. I have acquired papers in many communities. The effect they produce, their influence is no longer local; it is national."

Holman rose abruptly. He took out his watch. "My time is up," he announced, "I am not warranted in taking

from you any more of the public's minutes. I wish you would consider what I have said, not hastily but at your leisure, particularly the possibilities that such employment would give you and the great good that would result."

Mr. O'Malley shook his head. "I——" he began, but Holman held out his hand. "Suppose we dine together next week or the week after, and discuss it at length. Or we might take a run into the country some Sunday. But, in the meantime, please consider all phases of my proposal."

"I shall certainly give it careful consideration," Mr. O'Malley answered with serious courtesy.

Holman left the room briskly. It was not part of his plan to permit O'Malley to answer hastily and he had calculated well when he allowed himself ten minutes for the interview.

The District Attorney resumed his seat slowly. He was an astute man, optimistic, generous and every fibre honest, but a man who had dealt much with all classes of men and he wondered whether far back of Holman's offer some motive other than those he had advanced was not hidden; some serpent, perhaps, coiled under the roses. There was no reason, indeed, why he should not accept the place Holman had proffered. With the so-called practical side of politics he had no sympathy, and this lack, he knew, made greatly against his chance for ultimate and higher success in that field; his work in the District Attorney's office was nearly done; the stable had been swept clean and others might now care for it. He had contemplated the private practice of his profession with serene content. Holman's proposal made such a condition attractively possible. He had never quite made up his mind about Holman. In Congress Holman had been stalwart, modest and reliable. O'Malley had heard unpleasant rumors about his private life, but they were nothing more substantial than rumors, gossip concerning a Spanish girl Holman had brought from somewhere

in the West or, maybe, it was Europe. Gossip touched everyone in this city of wagging tongues; he, himself, had not wholly escaped. Of the general policy of Holman's papers he approved although he resented their immodest sensationalism. But, after all, that was a matter of taste not of principle. It might, indeed, be one of the points on which Holman sought the advice of an unprejudiced observer not so near the press-room or the counting-room as the proprietor. O'Malley was left with the effect Holman wished to leave: the possibilities in the work that had been proposed.

Holman, passing through the outer office of the District Attorney, observed McQuade, waiting. The old Boss was a most excellent waiter; some of his enemies said he never tired. Holman had heaped upon his grizzled head mountains of abuse, and now, as the two men saw each other, neither spoke. McQuade shot from under his bushy eyebrows a darting glance of contempt and hate. But it struck no fire from the flint of Holman's gaze. In his eyes as they rested on McQuade, there was no look of recognition and he passed on, stepping as firmly and surely as if the Dictator had not frowned.

As he entered his automobile he glanced at the clock. "Madison Avenue," he directed the driver. "You have twenty minutes in which to get there."

CHAPTER III

MR. FORNEY DRIFTS AGAIN TO A FRIENDLY HAVEN.

Senator Forney did what Holman thought he would do. He went straight to McQuade, the Boss.

On those rare occasions of introspection when Holman sought to excuse the cynicism that underlay his nature, he based his defence on the fact that events had always justified his pessimism. In his varied career he had been forced often to gamble on men's motives and he attributed no small part of his success to his having confidently counted upon the evil inspirations and unworthy deeds of his associates. Senator Forney's action was a case in point. Deceived by Holman's words and the envelope that had purposely been left lying on the desk, the politician hastened to the home of Jerry McQuade in lower Second Avenue. The house was one of the few remaining souvenirs of a departed aristocracy. It stood back from the street, rectangular and massive, exhibiting an austere dignity as if it frowned upon the changing character of the quarter which had yearly grown more squalid.

Three seats behind Senator Forney as he rode in an open Second Avenue car from the City Hall were Reifsnider and Redmond, their faces buried in their newspapers. And when Forney, his heart fluttering with excitement, mounted the wide steps that led to McQuade's door, the two reporters watched him from opposite sides of the street. Not until the door had opened and closed upon the former senator did the watchers join forces, resuming their vigil from a saloon across the street

through the windows of which they could keep in constant view the house opposite.

"How goes it, Patsy?" Riefsnider saluted the bartender.

"Salaam, Patrick," greeted Redmond, lifting his hand.

Patsy enjoyed a wide acquaintance due, in large measure, to the envied position of the saloon, which faced McQuade's house and which was said to be a financial venture of the Boss, but Patsy's popularity was an extraneous thing, the natural result of his unfailing, kindly fellowship and dependent upon neither his profession nor his favored location. His moon face was as solemn as night but his soul was as sunny and optimistic as a June day and shed a beneficent warmth upon his fellow-creatures.

"Anything doing?" asked Patsy as he set the glasses before the two men.

"No," Riefsnider assured him. "Merely wanted to see the Boss a minute. Know if he is at home?"

"Saw him go out a little while ago." The bartender gave the information willingly.

"Anything new, Patsy?" Riefsnider asked.

"Boss seems busy. Things are gettin' pretty lively before the convention. He's always runnin' in and out and people are comin' to the house at all hours, day an' night. Who d'ye think'll be nominated for president, Gus?"

"Lord! Where've you been, Patsy? Do you go to sleep serving drinks or does wiping glasses make you deaf? It's Heyward and no one else. He's got it cinched. They might just as well begin calling the roll now: 'Alabama?' 'Twenty-two for Abner J. Heyward of Ohio;' 'Arkansas?' 'Eighteen for Abner J. Heyward, of Ohio;' 'California?' 'Twenty for Abner J. Heyward of Ohio!' It will be like that all down the list. Bet you anything you want to bet Hayward gets the nomination on the first ballot. I was talking to one of the biggest

politicians in the country only yesterday, and he said there wasn't a doubt I was in right." Riefsnider, fair of feature and of mind, big of limb and of heart, with an attractive admixture of Teutonic solidity and American effervescence, voiced his opinion with enthusiasm.

"Can't be too sure, Gus. What do you think, Bob?" Patsy turned to Redmond.

"Patrick," said Redmond sententiously, "the convention is two long months off; it is to be held here in the city of New York, where the game of politics was born and has reached its highest development; the gentleman who, just now, is the peerless idol of the people, I refer to Gus's friend, the Honorable Mr. Heyward is, unfortunately, not the possessor of a golden barrel, and in politics, Patrick, popularity and poverty make a mighty uncertain combination."

"Rats!" retorted Riefsnider. He had the born orator's hatred of contradiction. "There's nobody else in sight. There's only one man with a barrel big enough to beat Heyward and that is"—his voice fell to an impressive whisper as if he were imparting a weighty secret—"David Holman, and he's got other fish to fry."

Other customers came in. Patsy mopped the counter and fell to polishing glasses again and the two reporters wandered to a stock-ticker in a corner by the window, from which point of vantage they could watch McQuade's house.

"What do you make of this assignment?" asked Riefsnider. They were speaking too low for their voices to carry to the bar where three or four men were ranged, leaning on elbows.

"Precious little except that it's disagreeable," Redmond yawned. "I hate this sort of work. My fancy, you know, Gus, is for an island. Like Stevenson, I would like to find some 'ultimate island' in the South Seas and do nothing but write what I wanted to write. Now I know a Greek——"

"Oh, submerge your island, Bob," Riefsnider broke in. "I know about your Greek, a chap that goes around with rugs on his shoulders."

"But they are beautiful rugs," put in Redmond, in whose dark eyes dreams floated; whose smooth white face suggested the emotions it hid. "And they come from Kurdistan and Afghanistan and other far away places where there is no aniline in the dyes. From generation to generation, from father to son, back to time immemorial they have handed down the secret of their wonderful reds and yellows and blues. Some day, Gus, I am going there and then, after that, to my 'Ultimate Island.'"

"Oh, to thunder with your island!" repeated Riefsnider. "It's too far from the Bowery for me. Do you know what's happening here about us? Do you know what this means, this little lay we are on? Didn't you see the Chief come out and give orders to Ellison? Do you suppose Ellison did this on his own hook?"

"Here, Gus, one at a time," interposed Redmond. "You pop your questions like fire crackers on the Fourth of July."

Riefsnider went on, heedless of the interruption. "It means, by the great and jumping Scot! that Holman is out for the presidency. It's as sure as a royal straight flush!" Redmond smiled tolerantly. The enthusiasm of the other, which long service had not worn thin, amused him, but he did not accept Riefsnider's opinion of Holman's intention any more than he accepted Riefsnider's estimate of Holman himself.

"What portfolio will you take if the Chief is elected?" he asked.

"There's no joke about that, either," retorted Riefsnider. "I'll be in for a fat place. The Chief would find me a good job somewhere; you can bet on that."

"For my own part," drawled Redmond. "I shall ask to be placed in the bureau of our insular possessions and

work up to be chief of a cannibal island." He was incorrigible.

"I tell you," Riefsnider continued, oblivious of his friend's incredulity, "the Chief is the greatest of them all. There isn't a man that comes near him who doesn't feel his force. He can do just about what he likes." He warmed to the idea that had newly possessed him. "He has been getting newspapers here and there quietly and slowly until now he has a circuit from coast to coast. You and I and others thought it was merely business, but it's more than that, Bob. He controls cities and states and, I tell you, old man, he can come pretty near controlling the country."

"Perhaps," was Redmond's doubting comment.

The two men observed the short, stocky figure of McQuade on the opposite side of the street and ceased talking. The Boss was returning in a sombre frame of mind from the District Attorney's office. He entered his home to find Senator Forney waiting for him and presently, in a severe, plainly-furnished back room of the house, a room known to politicians as "the Boss's office," Jerry McQuade and Wade Forney were discussing the same subject that held the attention of Redmond and Riefsnider. But here there was neither jesting nor enthusiasm. The two men were weighing probabilities with the patient care of a gold beater weighing his leaf. They held Holman in the balance. Forney, with an eye to dramatic effect, led up skilfully to the news of Heyward's promised withdrawal. McQuade received it calmly with a sceptical shake of the head. Forney at first, was content with repeating accurately Holman's words, but McQuade's unbelief spurred his imagination to add other words of his own, attributing them to Holman. He sought to strengthen his case so that McQuade must come to share his larger view of the situation. The envelope he had seen became a letter.

"And word for word what did it say, Wade?" From

the keen blast of McQuade's question Forney sought refuge in the statement that he had been able from his distant position to make out only a word here and there and the signature, of which he was absolutely certain.

"All men have their price," McQuade said finally, "but Abner Heyward's price is not to be paid in money, and David Holman has nothing else to offer."

His eyes, set deep and half hidden under shaggy eyebrows, closed. It was a favorite trick of his to draw between himself and those round him this veil, behind which he could think out in calmness solutions of the problems that were presented. Senator Forney, his last convincing word spoken, also relapsed into silence.

"I wonder, Wade," McQuade questioned absently, "what Holman's fortune really is."

"In the street they put it at close to one hundred millions." Forney paused. "But," he added, McQuade's question looming larger in its sinister significance. "You know that as well as I do. There's this bonanza of the Salvador mine that he discovered in Arizona; and he has other mines, gold and silver, and he has copper mines in Michigan and zinc mines in Missouri. I don't know the half of them. And then, of course, there are his newspapers. I saw a newspaper man sit down the other day and make a list of Holman's papers, just those he knew of, off hand, and he showed that Holman has thirty-one papers in twenty-two cities and there's one thing I remarked, Jerry"—he paused that his observation might have full effect—"he has papers in every doubtful state."

Forney's information was received in silence. McQuade sat motionless with closed eyes. The former senator tried to rouse him.

"Jerry, I don't believe you realize what a power this man has become. Everything he touches turns to gold, and he is investing his money in every part of the country. His income for one year would make most of New York's so-called millionaires seem poor in comparison.

I tell you, Jerry, when he gets started there's no stopping him; he gets what he goes after. And he seems to have got started."

"One hundred millions is a big sum," McQuade mused. His eyes opened. "No," he continued, "I'll not believe it. Abner Heyward knows too little the value of money."

"But if he *should* fail at the last moment!" Forney argued, "We'd be in an attractive, edifying situation, wouldn't we? Particularly you; it would make you look like a fool."

McQuade stroked his bristling iron-gray beard ruminatingly. His teeth sunk deeper into his unlighted cigar. It was a contingency to be reckoned upon. His visitor talked on, but it is doubtful if the Boss, hidden behind his veil, heard. He was thinking of many things. Forney's message had unfolded to him a prospect that was, in some respects, as enticing as it was, in others, forbidding.

"Wade," he said at length, apparently unaware that he had interrupted the other in the middle of an analysis of Holman's character, a cold, critical, but, on the whole, flattering study, "Wade, David Holman is forty-six years old. He has been in New York some fifteen years, but, after all, we know mighty little about him. He came from Virginia and made his money in mines in Arizona. We know that he has a lot of money, but I never met anybody who had been his friend in the South or in the West. Even here he hasn't any close friends. He seems to be a man of mystery. I never felt that I really knew him. I put him into Congress because the Party needed his money, but the next term, when he could have had a renomination, he wouldn't take it. We know that, scattered over the country, he has a good many newspapers, some of them with big circulations. No one has paid much attention to them or to him until lately. His proposal to you shows that he is out for the presidency

of the United States and sheds a new light on things. What's his game? What's he after? Is it only the presidency or is it the Party, or is it something bigger still? Wade, you're right; we've been asleep while he's been working."

Throughout Senator Forney's intimate experience with McQuade he had never heard the leader make so long a speech. He apprehended how intense must be the interest that inspired it. But the old fighter as he sat there, rugged and grizzled, his thick bearded, heavy eye-browed face impenetrable, gave his visitor no hint of his plans.

"I might find out something more about him," Senator Forney ventured.

McQuade suddenly roused himself. "Good. I wish you would," he said, and held out his hand. Forney, surprised by this sudden termination of the interview, was out upon the broad steps before he realized that McQuade had given him no definite answer. Indeed, it now seemed to him that the Boss had not answered at all.

When Senator Forney had left him, Jerry McQuade sat long at his desk. Once or twice he spoke to himself.

"One hundred million dollars," he muttered. "One hundred million dollars."

That night Martin Brennan, formerly a prize-fighter, more recently a detective, and now McQuade's confidential and trusted spy, left New York on a fast train for the West. He bore instructions to pick up every thread of David Holman's early life and to bring back the woven story to the Boss.

Senator Forney was perplexed and disheartened as he descended McQuade's steps. He had run to the Boss with hopes high, bent upon exchanging his early information for some assurance as to his own future. His imagination, lifted by the swelling news he had heard, soared into the remote possibilities. He had foreseen a

combination between Holman and McQuade, to further the candidacy of the editor, which would be invincible. With the Boss's aid Holman's nomination was assured. There was no doubt of that and the idea of being the one to promote such a combination had been the straw that had tickled Mr. Forney's fancy to exuberance. Upon McQuade's opportunism and upon Holman's consuming ambition he had builded a magnificent castle that had gradually assumed the impressive form of the capitol at Washington, until, when he had entered McQuade's home, he had already peopled his dream-building, at least in so far as one seat in the Senate Chamber was concerned. He had persuaded himself that Holman, although he attacked McQuade in public, would accept the Boss as an ally whose unlovely banners could bring victory, and that McQuade, who hated Holman savagely, would not pay back old scores when the payment might effect his own exchequer. Now that he was leaving the Boss, Forney was oppressed by a sense of failure, a realization that his dream structure had crumbled away to nothing, dissolving like a picture on a screen, leaving no trace. As his hopes had been high, his present disappointment was correspondingly dismal. In spite of several shrewd attempts on his part to introduce it, the subject of an alliance between McQuade and Holman had not been touched upon; the entire attitude of the Boss had been discouraging to such an idea. Forney thrust his hands deep in his pockets and stood for a moment irresolute in the street.

"Hell!" he groaned under his breath. It was his one word to express the depth of his disgust.

In a cloud of gloom Senator Forney rode on a surface car to the Grand Central station. His thoughts enveloped him murkily and he transferred at Forty-second street mechanically. Had he been less deeply immersed in his slough of despond he could hardly have failed to see Riefsnider or Redmond for both men were known to

him. Riefsnider was almost at his elbow when he purchased a ticket for Port Chester. The reporter bought tickets for himself and Redmond for the same destination. Senator Forney took his place in the train darkly. It was as if he were running away from a world that had ill-used him.

"He's goin' to Mag Reardon's, sure," whispered Riefsnider excitedly.

"He can go to a worse place than that as far as I am concerned," growled Redmond. "I hate this business of tracking men. What right have we, what right has David Holman, to be spying on a man in the conduct of his private affairs?"

"At it again, eh, Bob?" was Riefsnider's only comment. He added good-humoredly, "Come, cheer up, this will be worth while; see if it isn't."

Riefsnider's persistent enthusiasm was a scourge for dejection and his buoyancy slowly communicated itself to Redmond. Riding in the car next to that chosen by Senator Forney the reporters speculated on the meaning of the Senator's visit to Mag Reardon's.

"This is what I've wanted to know for five years," Riefsnider said. "This is where Senator Wade Forney disappears to when little bosses and big bosses want to find him and can't. This is where a good many of them come, the worst of them, when they want to hide from us, from you and me, the Distinguished Representatives of the Press. There is where dozens of dirty jobs are cooked up, ready to be served, hot from the griddle. Oh, I knew that, all right, as I guess you knew it. Mag Reardon's Chapel is the Sunday School for a lot of them; but what I did not know is that Senator Wade Forney is one of the crowd that frequents her hospitable house. And now, Bob, I see a great light. It's the end of the Hon. Wade Forney. He has been going down hill pretty fast. He can't let whiskey alone. He began before he left Washington and, now, it's a regular toboggan. Mark my

words, Bob, I can see his finish." He went on extravagantly until the train stopped at Port Chester. Mr. Forney, abandoning his shattered dreams, awoke with a start. Bundling out of the car, he stepped into one of the waiting station carriages. Riefsnider approached another and addressed the driver. He slipped a coin into the man's hand as he said: "Keep that other carriage in sight."

As the vehicle in the wake of the other, ascended the hill over roads uneven and muddy from an early thaw and the barren trees that, in summer, hid, as if in shame, the notorious house, came into view, Riefsnider patted his companion on the back and chuckled:

"Oh! I never yet made one mistake; I'd like to for variety's sake," he hummed gleefully.

Riefsnider's characterization of Mag Reardon's resort, generally referred to by its frequenters as the Chapel, was, on the whole, accurate. It was rarely mentioned in the newspapers; it was seldom spoken of among men, and yet there was not a ward politician in New York who did not know of it. It was a place of many conferences. Situated in Connecticut, just over the New York state line, the house stood back from the road in a thick grove of oaks and elms. It had been a stately old mansion in revolutionary times, but was now fallen upon evil days, serving as a road house where meetings might be held, plots hatched, liquor drunk and no questions asked. It was of brick and had originally been square, but to the older massive building had been added on either side, ells, and to these, in turn, additions had been made so that, in the aggregate, it gave the impression of rambling shiftlessness as if the house, once so straight, rectangular and substantial, now stooped and slouched in a dissolute old age. To the majority of its frequenters Mag Reardon's road-house was merely an isolated place of meeting, but to a few it was a Nirvana where, senseless from alcohol, they forgot those things they wished to

forget, things at which their sober sense revolted. Of the patrons of the place Senator Wade Forney belonged to the latter limited class. In the hours of defeat, when the loss of power or place had made him desperate; in his hours of victory, when his triumph seemed too exquisite to endure, and in those darker, more frequent periods when the beast within him rebelled at restraint and crushed his weakly-opposing will, Forney, like a returned sailor, sought the harbor of Mag Reardon's impiously-named resort. At present he was vexed with himself and out of patience. He seemed suddenly to have failed, even to have been contemptuously thrust aside as too insignificant to be reckoned with, first by the domineering Holman and, later, by the overmastering McQuade. He could no longer deceive himself; he had realized long since, with keen distress, that his hold on his place in life had greatly weakened. He had climbed to a high position and now he was falling back. It was overwhelming, humiliating, to be dropping lower and lower. In the sickness of his soul he cried out for his old remedy, the only anesthetic he knew.

An ill-featured man in half-livery opened the door for him.

"Is Maggie in?" Forney asked, and, receiving an affirmative reply, added, "Give me a room and send her to me."

He had thrown off his collar and coat and his florid face and heavy neck were aflame with the fever of thirst that was consuming him when, without knocking, Maggie Reardon entered the room. She shut the door softly and then faced him.

"Oh! Wade," she cried, "has it come on again?"

"None of your questions," he commanded. "Send up a bottle of whiskey, quick. Quick, Maggie," he pleaded, his tone suddenly changing to one of piteous entreaty. "I'm half dead."

She rang a bell and faced him, her wide blue eyes soft

with a strange pity. Tall and stately, Mag Reardon, nearing the winter of her life, kept her hold on much of that beauty, which, at eighteen, had made her the celebrity of the ward, and, in the end, proved her undoing. She had known Wade Forney in that distant day and he, the son of a lawyer-politician, and already noted for his eloquence and good looks, had flattered her with his attentions. In those days, when she considered that her beauty forced upon her a proud imperiousness, she had loved him, and, loving, had heaped upon the young man so many regarded as above her, the insults of her coquetry which Forney, no less proud than she, had resented, perhaps misunderstood, and had sent her on her way and to the other men, who, loving her less, had easily traded on her vanity to gain their ends. Caring never deeply, understanding not too much, shallow, but lovely always to look upon, the vicissitudes of life had ripened her into sedate and stately womanhood. She was fifty years old. The experiences of her existence should have made her a hundred, but a preserving philosophy of indifference had shielded her from wasting regrets, nor had she fretted away any of her beauty in the pursuit of vain ambitions. She had drifted from one level of existence to another, taking the rapids easily, avoiding the rocks and shaping her course always towards the more placid pools. For a long time now she had been the mistress of the road-house known familiarly as the Chapel. Her ability to hold her tongue under any provocation and a valuable lack of curiosity, together with the geographical location of her home, made the Chapel an ideal place for its present purposes.

The woman cared for Forney as much as she cared for anyone, but it was not in her nature to feel deeply. These periodical visits from her girlhood lover were at once the sweetest and bitterest episodes of her existence. It did not need her dearly-bought wisdom to convince her that the Wade Forney of her youth was passing rapidly.

She delighted in his presence, but it grieved her to see him suffer the torments of a racked soul, writhing often in delirium to emerge sick in mind and body, but purged, for the time, of his consuming desire. She obeyed always, as faithfully as she could, his orders, even the wilder ones that were half from the man and half from the drink. It was her easy creed to let every one go his own way.

Forney threw himself face downward on a sofa and, pillowing his head on his arms, groaned aloud until the man returned, bringing the whiskey. The bottle shook in Forney's trembling hands, clattering against the glass as he poured, but he waved aside the woman's proffered assistance and filled the glass until it ran over. Then he bent his lips to it and sucked up the liquid. His first swallow calmed him temporarily and, lifting the glass, he drank deep of its contents before he put it down. Mag Reardon stood mute beside him, her blue eyes bent upon him sorrowfully for she knew that this was but the beginning.

With his second glass, acute distress seemed to pass from the man and he raised a beaming face, eloquent with gratitude.

"Maggie," he confided, "you are a jewel. See me through this. I've been up to heaven and down to hell in the last twenty-four hours."

He reached for the glass again, filled it, and again drained it. For a long time he remained in thought. His memory still walked the treadmill of the day's defeats but they now appeared more endurable. Obscured by the fumes of alcohol the vision was less hideous to his pride. An inspiration illumined his face.

"Maggie, you know so many, did David Holman ever come here?" He was grasping at a straw.

"No." The woman's voice was far off to him.

"Maggie, if David Holman ever comes here; if yevver hear he's upter any dirty work, I wancher to lemme

know. Hear, Mag?" His speech was coming thickly. "I wancher lemme know first thing."

The woman nodded.

"I wancher promise me, Maggie," Forney insisted.

"I promise, Wade," the woman said softly. The man was satisfied.

"Maggie, you're a jewel. I'm goin' drink your health." He raised his glass. "This is a pledge, remember. You'll lemme know first thing." He beamed upon her in maudlin admiration.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH A MAN'S PLAY IS INTERRUPTED BY HIS BUSINESS IN LIFE

David Holman sat in the drawing room of the house known to those nearest his confidence merely as "Madison Avenue." It was an unpretentious brown-stone house differing outwardly from most of the others in the block only by rather garish stained-glass medallions in the windows of the street floor. Holman's face was aglow from recent driving against the wind, the red showing through the dark tan of his skin. Standing before him in the attitude of a soldier receiving orders was a little boy dressed in automobiling cap and wraps. His face was raised to Holman, a pale, wistful face with an upturned nose and deep-set, far-seeing eyes.

"Captain," Holman addressed him, "did you have a fine ride?"

"Bully, Amigo," said the boy, without changing countenance. Holman caught him up, lifted him high and then held him tight against his breast.

"Oh, you did, did you, you little rascal?" he cried. "Well, some of these days you'll have an automobile of your own. Just as soon as you're big enough to run it; remember, just as soon as you're big enough; so hurry up and grow." He caught the boy in his arms again. "But not too fast, Captain, not too fast. I'd rather keep you as you are for a long while yet."

A young woman came in from the hallway. Under her dark skin the color now flamed high in her cheeks.

"It was a superb run." She spoke with a little sigh of ecstasy and, passing before one of the long mirrors that adorned the room, adjusted her costume, falling

by habit into graceful poses as she gazed critically at her reflection. The skirt, flaring in wide plaits at the bottom, but tight fitting at the hips, set off conspicuously her rounded figure and the lace blouse conforming closely, revealed the bust and slender waist frankly.

"Have a good time, Captain?" she asked still regarding herself in the glass. She spoke with the slightest of foreign accents: a little rolling of the r's and a peculiar pronunciation of the Latin derivatives. It was an accent that lingered in one's memory subtly but which one could not imitate.

"Fine, Mamacita," the boy answered. Holman released him and the child, running to the woman's side, raised his face for a caress. She bent down and kissed him and began removing his coat.

"Let me, Zaidee," Holman requested gently. "Come here, Captain."

Zaidee, releasing the child, passed on into another room, every movement of grace, the dress sweeping after her, rustling as she disappeared. Captain resumed his position of attention before Holman. That the boy and the man were the best of comrades was to be seen in every gesture. Holman removed the child's wraps with an exaggerated roughness which Captain endured as part of the game forever going on between them.

"Caramba," muttered the man. He had a habit of using mild Spanish oaths in the boy's presence. "Caramba, you're like a big bear."

"If I were a bear, Amigo, I'd bite you for shaking me so."

"Oh, you would, would you?" roared the man and, growling furiously, he buried his great head in the child's neck as if to devour him. Captain cried aloud with delight. There was no part of their game he so much enjoyed and the mention of bears was a sure signal for the fun to begin. He plunged his small hands in Holman's thick wavy black hair and tousled it gleefully.

Zaidee came from the other room and was soon on her hands and knees beside the child, joining in the romp. Holman leaned over and kissed her.

"Senorita Jealousy," he mocked. "You're afraid I'll steal Captain."

She flung her head back disdainfully. "You are always saying something horrid." But she forgave him quickly and kissed him as she rose, flushed and panting, from the unwonted exercise. Standing by his side, the red blood racing under the dark olive of her skin, her eyes flashing and her whole presence radiating a glow of youth almost riotous, she was altogether lovely. There was something about the dark Spanish features, the curl of her lips, red, full and sensuous, that recalled Sargent's picture of the Woman with the Cloak. Round about her as intangible as a perfume, was a breath of tragedy, a sort of danger-signal that some persons seem to display.

She and Holman stood before the child who, relieved of his heavy cloak and cap, now appeared even more fragile and delicate. The little legs, encased in black silk stockings, the slender body clothed in a belted dark brown velvet blouse and trousers of the same material, caught at the knee after the fashion of the day, and the child's ivory-white face and dark hair gave to him a pathetic appearance of frailness. He was sprightly enough, however, and ran lightly into the other room, Holman and the woman following him with smiling eyes.

Presently Zaidee turned to the man with: "Who were those people you bowed to in the Park?"

He put her off. "I bowed to several if I remember rightly."

"I mean the man and woman in that big red Panhard." She bit her lip slightly at his attempted evasion.

"The man was young Austin Pemberton. You've probably heard of him."

"The Society Valet," she sneered, and walked away from him. A frown swept over her face changing the

expression startlingly. It was as if a painter had suddenly transposed the shadows and high lights so that what was left bore small resemblance to what had been. Her face mirrored the hatred in which she held fashionable society and the fear that Holman might some day be attracted by it away from her, realizing only too clearly that from that circle though it might admit him, she was excluded. Neither blood nor training made her eligible. Frankly, she did not wish to be among those of Newport and Fifth Avenue; the gipsy in her rebelled at the idea, but she jealously considered that Holman should share her own proscription and join in her contemptuous animosity. That he had showed lately a disposition to be less intolerant than herself was a thorn in her side.

If Zaidee Gonzales, or Mrs. Sylvestre, as she was known, had followed her own inclinations, she would have flaunted her love for Holman as daringly as her mother had paraded her sudden affection for Tony Gonzales after that dashing worthy had flung gold pieces on the stage where she danced in the rear of a saloon in the small Arizona village where Gonzales was spending a part of the fortune he, with Holman, was crushing out of the rocks nearby. Her name had been Zaidee; if she had ever rejoiced in another name, few of the miners knew it. She was half Mexican and could cast back their coarse Spanish oaths at her auditors like a vaquero. Tony Gonzales was ready to fight for her and to give her money and she loved him as much for the one as for the other. They lived together openly. It was a union more nearly reciprocal than many more orthodox, for the man gave and the woman received and the woman gave and the man received, and it was to be so for as long as both of them pleased, which happened to be as long as life. When Gonzales was killed in a saloon brawl by another miner named Cordova, the woman followed him quickly. Even the little Zaidee could not fasten her

interest on life, and Tony Gonzales' widow, once as brazen and hard as the woman of a mining camp can be, died, so the miners said, of a broken heart, and Tony Gonzales' child, eight years old and even then beautiful, became in obedience to the wish of her father, and because there was no one else to care for her, his partner's ward.

It was soon afterward that the Salvador mine became a sensational ore producer, and from the rough mining camp where she had acquired knowledge that was as picturesque as it was rudimentary, Zaidee had come with Holman to New York. She had been placed in the care of governesses and, later, sent to a fashionable boarding school in Riverside Drive, but the girl chafed at the restraint, as might have been expected, and, when she was seventeen, Holman yielded to her wish that she continue her studies in Europe. When she returned to New York, four years later, she was known as Mrs. Sylvestre and had a son three years old. Monsieur or Senor or Mr. Sylvestre did not burden her with his presence. She and Holman were seen often together. There were knowing nods and whispers from those whose heads and tongues wag never so gaily as when set in motion by the appearance of evil. To babbling friends Holman asserted that his interest in his beautiful ward was purely parental and regarded as a legacy from his dead partner. The assertion was made in such a manner that the inquisitive friends never again mentioned the subject.

Zaidee made no acquaintances in New York. She was content in the friendship of her guardian and only lately had jealous, disturbing suspicions arisen that other interests might crowd her from the place she had occupied so long in Holman's life. She resented his devotion to his newspaper; she had quarreled with him because of his one political venture. Within the last few days he had been inattentive; almost neglectful and she saw now in his passing nod to a man known as the sponsor

to more than one climbing society aspirant, a threatened danger. Later in the evening Zaidee returned, with morbid persistence, to the disagreeable subject.

"Who was the woman in the Park with Mr. Pember-ton?" she asked. Her pretence of indifference was so unconvincing that it amounted to no pretence at all.

Holman smiled at the effort she was making. "I am surprised you did not recognize her by her pictures in the papers," he said. "You, yourself, pointed her out to me in the *Epoch* only this afternoon. That, Zaidee, was none other than Miss Harriet Stowers, the niece of Mrs. Roswell Van Alstyne, leader of New York's most exclusive society, and, by that token, to be greatly admired for furnishing copy to such purveyors to the public taste as the New York *Daily Epoch* and its unworthy imitators. Only today she has added to our circulation by refusing a bankrupt duke."

"I recognized her," Zaidee admitted sullenly. "Who wouldn't; her pictures are everywhere. It's positively brazen."

"Oh, ho!" teased Holman.

"She seemed interested enough in you," the girl flung at him. "She may be Mrs. Van Alstyne's niece and a member of the precious Smart Set but she lacks good manners. She turned deliberately around in her car to look at you."

"Then you must have turned, too, or you wouldn't have seen her. 'Ware of the glass houses, Zaidee."

The girl bit her lip in vexation. "I detest such people," she exclaimed savagely. "I detest them; hypocrites that pretend to an aristocracy, worshippers of money and influence, their women no better than other women, the men unspeakable, brainless idiots that ape real men."

She flung herself into a chair. Holman was used to such storms of temper. He knew that they soon passed. Coming to where she sat, he placed an arm about her and

bent to close her eyes with his kisses. To his surprise he found tears on her lashes.

"Heigho! *Senorita Jealousy*," he said banteringly. "What's this? Is it all for the beautiful Miss Harriet Stowers? Why, I haven't even met her! She probably hates me as much as you think you hate her. I dare say she was merely staring out of curiosity to see your great untamed lion, who, they pretend to believe, is ready to devour the Society she is so fond of. Or, more probably, she was looking back at a very, very beautiful, but very much spoiled girl with red Spanish roses in her cheeks and black Spanish nights in her eyes and hair. And if Miss Harriet Stowers lives to be the leader of Society twenty times over and marries a duke and becomes lady in waiting to her Gracious Majesty the Queen, she will never be as regal, never as beautiful and never as charming as a little Spanish-French-Mexican lady I sometimes hold in my arms and try to teach not to be jealous."

He bent over and kissed her again and she smiled up at him, brushing away the tears.

They heard the ringing of the telephone and the maid soon after announced that Mr. Ellison, at the *Epoch* office, wished to speak to Mr. Holman. Zaidee heard Holman's voice and his laugh of content as he conversed at the telephone in the adjoining hall.

"Forney saw McQuade?" he said, "Good." There was a pause. "So he's at the Chapel?" he asked. "He'll be quiet there for a week. That's all I wanted to know." His chuckle sounded through the hall. "And, Mr. Ellison," he added, "tell Riefsnider and Redmond I say it's good work. They can come home." When Holman again joined her, anxiety brooded in Zaidee's dark eyes.

"What has happened to Mr. Forney?" she asked.

"A very simple and usual thing," he answered. "He's drunk. He is killing himself and his chances in life because he's a fool and the sooner the world is rid of him the better for him and the world."

"Poor man," she sighed.

"'Poor man'" he mocked. "This afternoon you said you hated him."

"I did not mean it; I am sorry for him."

"Bah! He's not worth your pity. He is where he belongs."

She came to his side. "Amigo," she said with a trace of sadness in her voice, "sometimes you seem very cruel."

He frowned. "I am not cruel. It is not I, Zaidee. It is the rule of life. The wise survive; the foolish perish. If a man plans carelessly or stupidly he fails and he should fail; if he plans wisely and devotes his energies and his time to the undertaking he succeeds. To get anything in life a man must keep at it, always, always."

His straight lips closed tightly and his eyes were as cold and hard as granite but he placed his powerful hands on her shoulders holding her at arm's length, gazing into her luminous eyes and upon her smooth, full, red mouth until the admiration of her beauty erased all trace of sternness from his face.

CHAPTER V

RELATING TO A YOUNG MAN WITH THE BIRD-LIKE QUALITY OF LOOKING OUT FOR WORMS

Young Mr. Austin Pemberton was shrewd; fair and roly-poly and shrewd. His little bird's eyes, as blue as Delft china, could detect from afar with unfailing accuracy, the sustaining worm. As naturally as a crow alights on a fertile corn-field he had attached himself to Mrs. Roswell Van Alstyne and, under the social protection of that dictatorial ruler, he had prospered. There were many who did not like young Mr. Pemberton and there were many who did not like Mrs. Roswell Van Alstyne, but they liked each other for their separate reasons. Mr. Pemberton was amusing; he was gossipy and bright and witty at the expense of others which was the form of wit Mrs. Van Alstyne most appreciated and employed. Her tongue kept always in readiness a poisoned thrust for her enemies and a sting for her friends, so that those who were vulnerable, and there were few who were not, writhed under her leadership, fearing to voice the complaints they would have uttered if, in so doing, they might have escaped unscathed. There was a period of jubilation when, through the medium of a scandalous divorce, Mrs. Van Alstyne had exchanged husbands, profiting in the exchange to the extent of several millions of dollars. In regard to the husbands, the first had much the better of the comparison except in the matter of wealth, but no one had ever dreamed of considering either of the society leader's matrimonial partners except as her banker.

It was when her enemies, seizing the opportunity her divorce offered, were returning with interest the bitter

epigrams and phrases Mrs. Van Alstyne had previously paid out to them that young Mr. Pemberton appeared on the scene and, with all the ardor of a soldier of fortune, had enlisted in her diminishing ranks. He was a valuable fighter in that kind of warfare—a woman's war for that which was important only to her. Mrs. Van Alstyne had emerged victorious but bearing the marks of the conflict. She retained her leadership, but her enemies were no longer afraid and now came out from under cover to sneer at her openly. The one person to whom this woman's war had brought glory and profit was Mr. Austin Pemberton. More than one, hating Mrs. Van Alstyne, had given to her favored lieutenant all the credit for the truce that had permitted her to continue in the occupation of her position. And like many another soldier of fortune, young Mr. Pemberton had turned the success of his cause to personal advantage entrenching himself securely in the place he had gained with his wits as his weapon.

After a fashion Pemberton was not unlikeable. He was entertaining, possessing a pleasant ability to make men and women laugh, and, in this day of the long, stern chase of the dollar and the mirthless pursuit of position, to make one laugh is no mean achievement. But, above all other qualifications entitling him to the regard of his associates, Pemberton possessed tact. He said the right word at the right time to the right person. He was sarcastic and cynical and cruel with Mrs. Van Alstyne and pleased her greatly; he was courteous and amusing and attentive with Miss Harriet Stowers and, so, won her friendly interest; and he was shrewd and deep and adroit with David Holman for his little bird-eyes had seen there the sustaining worm and he was hovering about David Holman just as naturally as he had flown to Mrs. Van Alstyne when he left the poor parental nest in Virginia.

Pemberton had need of David Holman and David

Holman had need of Mr. Pemberton, for Holman's expanding ambition detected a weakness in what others considered his strength. His hold upon the masses was sure and due in large measure to his attacks upon the moneyed powers that had made the masses suffer. When the day came for casting ballots the People would be supreme, for a rich man's vote is no heavier than a poor man's vote, and on that day Holman would be the People's Friend and, if necessary, their friend alone, but in naming the candidate the Millions were less powerful than the Four or Five. In Mrs. Van Alstyne's circle were one or two men who were master-manipulators and Holman was confident that if he could mingle with these men on terms of social friendliness he could win their support. It would be easy enough then to convince them that he was no foolish, visionary altruist, no nihilist seeking the destruction of a discriminating government, no anarchist ready to apply the torch to monuments built by men of doubtful honesty on foundations that had been laid in the dark when the world at large saw only dimly what was being done. He could offer them inducements; their own inducements, such as had influenced them in the past. He could promise them protection and abnormal profit. He would use them until the convention and after that, if necessary, but he would turn on them in the end unless they followed him blindly, not seeking to lead but willing to be led.

Mr. Pemberton did not know why David Holman desired to become the friend of Mrs. Roswell Van Alstyne; nor did he greatly care. All the men he had ever met and all the women, too, had been desirous of climbing to the top of the social mountain; David Holman was but one of many. He accepted Holman's valuable aid in advertising his automobiles; he accepted money in the guise of loans for which he gave notes that were unsecured and neither he nor Holman expected the cash to be returned. But Holman did expect to be pre-

sented to Mrs. Roswell Van Alstyne and this Mr. Pemberton had no idea of doing for he was an adept in the art of procrastination when social creditors demanded the fulfilment of his promises to introduce them to the Powers of Place, and had reasoned that, when at last he could postpone payment no longer, he would arrange for Holman luncheons or dinners where he would meet members of a circle the periphery of which entered, although slightly, the Van Alstyne orbit expecting that this method which had sufficed in other cases, would satisfy Holman. But young Mr. Pemberton was rapidly discovering his mistake. For David Holman was not one of those who could be denied even by the slippery Mr. Pemberton. Suavely, pleasantly but relentlessly Holman was pressing for payment and the bird-eyes of the young Virginian saw that, in some manner, this claim must be settled. He was not ready to take Holman to Mrs. Van Alstyne. He remembered too distinctly a remark of that lady when he had tentatively introduced the editor's name into their conversation. The flabby, artificial face of the society leader had become even coarser and grimmer and the small, snapping eyes even more cruel.

"That man!" she had exclaimed. "He's an anarchist! He would like to be a Samson and pull down the temple about our heads. I hate the mention of his name or his papers."

There was no danger that Pemberton would refer to Holman again in Mrs. Van Alstyne's presence and, casting about for some other way in which to pay his debt, he selected Harriet Stowers as a splendid substitute. The aunt was unattainable; the niece might serve. Miss Stowers, indeed, was just the one for his purpose. She was a philanthropist and could appreciate David Holman's philanthropy; her work among the poor of the East Side which had gained for her the dissenting praise of her friends should induce sympathy for David Hol-

man's championship of the masses. She was not bound by convention as were other girls. Her position in society was too secure for her to be burdened by it.

Pemberton had called on Miss Stowers twice for the purpose of discovering her opinion of David Holman and, to his joy, he found the girl ready to praise the editor for those things Mrs. Van Alstyne had considered reasons for blame. But Pemberton had moved slowly. When he saw her he allowed Holman's name to come naturally into the conversation and permitted it to disappear from their talk when other themes obscured it. On the day that Mrs. Sylvestre had seen Mr. Pemberton and Miss Stowers riding in the Park, Pemberton had again approached the subject when Holman passed:

"You said you had never seen David Holman, Miss Harriet," the young man remarked suddenly to his companion. "Then look well for here he comes."

The two men saluted in passing and Miss Stowers, moved by curiosity, had turned in her seat just in time to catch Zaidee's disapproving glance.

"Who is that beautiful girl with him?" she asked.

"His ward," Pemberton explained, "the daughter of a poor miner Holman knew in the West. Her father died when she was a baby and her mother died soon afterwards and Holman adopted the child. He has lavished money on her, sending her to schools here and in Europe. They say that he has given her a fortune."

Miss Stowers was silent. "She had no relatives?" she asked at length.

"None, I believe; at least none that were known. She was a waif." He gave the story as he had had it once from Holman. "I fancy that being a waif in a mining camp is about as exciting as any life a child could lead," he concluded.

Pemberton smiled, but Miss Stowers did not see the lighter side of the picture. Into her soft brown expressive eyes there came the troubled look that her friends

were wont to detect when she returned from her visits to the East Side. Her mobile face, as delicate in its coloring as peach-tree blossoms, mirrored her thoughts.

"Few sadder tragedies could happen to a little girl, I suppose," she said. "It was kind of Mr. Holman, kind and generous."

Unprompted, Mr. Pemberton would not have described David Holman as kind, but he quickly confirmed his companion's opinion. "Mr. Holman is kind," he averred, "and the most generous man I have ever known. He spends a fortune among the poor every year."

"I have seen it," answered Miss Stowers. "At first I doubted the sincerity that prompted the gifts, but a little practical experience convinced me of the good that he is doing. In summer he distributes ice free to those in the tenements. All who wish can have enough to last during the day and I have seen men bringing their pieces of ice home to sick wives and children and blessing David Holman's name. He supplies milk for the babies of the poor. It is impossible to calculate how many lives he has saved. The percentage of mortality among little children in the tenements has decreased markedly since he established his charity. And in winter on the bitter-cold days he distributes coal and food and even clothing. To many he is like some great god they have never seen. You know they are mostly pagans, the wretchedly poor, caring, naturally, little for a religion that brings them no results that they can see, and whenever the days are hot and they get ice or when it is freezing and they get coal they are ready to worship David Holman. I hope that doesn't strike you as cynical for it is not. They cannot help it; they have had no advantages. Most of them are ignorant, frightfully so, and they follow the primary instincts."

"Savages," Pemberton suggested.

"No, not that," Miss Stowers answered, "for they are kind and true and often pathetically tender. If you

could only see them bringing home to their crowded, huddled families the things that David Holman gives them! I used to object to his gifts at first; organized not individual charity is the general cry, you know. But the gifts of organized charity too often have red tape attached to bother those whose weak hands can't untie the knots and Mr. Holman's gifts are made so freely. Any one can take. No questions are asked. The poor frightened creatures are not terrified by officious agents. They get so much real happiness from what Mr. Holman does for them that I have changed my views. It's pathetic, the sight of those famished driven creatures. They need a friend."

Her tender eyes rested upon the gentle slope of the park hills and on the firs and larches they were passing. Mr. Pemberton fell into her mood.

"Holman is their friend," he said. "He makes a parade of it, perhaps, in his newspapers, but he is very modest about it in conversation. He is a delightful man."

"He is a very handsome man," Miss Stowers answered. "I can't recall when I have seen a more impressive face."

"It reflects the man," assured Pemberton. "He is just as strong and commanding as his face indicates."

"He must be very interesting."

"He is and an agreeable chap, too. Do you know, Miss Harriet, I believe you would be glad to know him."

"I feel sure I should like him," she replied.

Pemberton's round face beamed his delight. "Suppose I bring him around," he suggested.

"He might not wish to come."

The possibility broadened Pemberton's smile. "I'd drag him if it were necessary, but I am sure he will be glad to accept the invitation."

"I thought he condemned 'Society'!"

"No, he does not," Pemberton explained. "He told me so himself no later than yesterday. He condemns those

who, as he believes, got their money dishonorably and are spending it unwisely."

"And I agree with him," assented the girl looking straight into the eyes of the man as if to challenge argument. "The way some of our friends spend their money is worse than foolish, it's criminal."

Mr. Pemberton had no intention of opposing her. "Oh, we all know you are a socialist, Miss Harriet," he laughed. "I am glad I am exempt from your accusation. I don't know how I should devote my wealth if I had any, but, as I haven't, no one can accuse me of spending my money with criminal prodigality."

Miss Stowers smiled with him, but before she could get far away from the subject Pemberton said: "Suppose I bring Mr. Holman to your house tomorrow afternoon." He would not let this opportunity escape.

She assented gladly. "I'll let you know if he should have another engagement," said Pemberton and then skipped to other subjects as lightly as the bird, with the worm captured and gobbled, hops back to the bough.

CHAPTER VI

AN ALLY IS FOUND AND A DEBT IS SETTLED

The day after David Holman had scornfully ridiculed Mrs. Sylvestre's intuitive fears that he stood ready to parley with those she considered her enemies he made his first call upon Miss Harriet Stowers. To Austin Pemberton's invitation he had responded with enthusiasm: "My dear fellow, I shall be charmed to meet your friends, particularly a niece of the interesting Mrs. Van Alstyne, who, judging from the descriptions you have given and others I have heard, must be a remarkable young woman." Young Pemberton could not guess how Holman's heart had leaped at the suggestion.

The two went together to Miss Stowers' home, Holman filled with ardent hope and daring intention; Mr. Pemberton possessed of a determination that this first visit should be brief and such as to excite in Miss Stowers' mind a further interest in the man for whom he was acting as sponsor.

Miss Stowers was dressed in white, a simple gown of exquisite material, soft and cool, suiting well that ineffable gentleness of character which found partial expression in her face. Her hair, the color of clear amber when it is held up to the light, was worn loosely brushed back from the low white forehead. Its fine texture made it as pliant as spun silk and difficult to restrain but in its loose arrangement and gently waving freedom there was no suggestion of carelessness.

With unaffected cordiality she greeted her visitors and Holman, with a trace of old-fashioned courtesy that was the only outward reminder of his Virginia nativity, bent

low over the slender hand that grasped his own firmly. His blue-gray eyes looked down into the hazel-brown eyes of the girl without a trace of uncertainty, a paternal kindliness and the appreciation of youth mingled in his regard.

Mr. Pemberton, experienced and capable, directed the current of the conversation and he bubbled along to the accompaniment of Miss Stowers' low pleasant laughter and an occasional monosyllabic comment from Mr. Holman. But as he talked, for his chatter made no exacting demand on the attention, Miss Stowers was thinking of Holman and David Holman's mind was occupied with thoughts of Miss Stowers. She found herself admiring his reserve, his sure discriminating comments; his deep, mellow voice; his air of unobtrusive mastery. And Holman was satisfying his soul with her low laughter; he had never heard a sweeter, more musical laugh, and he was thinking of her grace and her beauty, for although she was known always as "the beautiful Miss Stowers," the exquisite charm of her face came to the beholder as a following thought, secondary to the admiration of an indefinable sweetness and nobility which, in the spoken comment of her friends, became subordinate only because they failed words to describe it, so much easier does it fall to the lip or the hand to portray the features than the spirit.

Just before the two men left, Miss Stowers took advantage of a pause in Mr. Pemberton's chatter to get a larger glimpse of Mr. Holman's character.

"Mr. Pemberton and I were speaking of you yesterday," she began.

"Did your ears burn?" young Pemberton asked him.

"Which ear is for the good thing said; the right good, the left bad, or the other way about?" Holman questioned in his turn and then, directing his glance at Miss Stowers, excluded Pemberton with another question. "I

tempt my fate, Miss Stowers, which ear should have burned?"

"We were speaking of your charity to the poor of the East Side," she answered.

"You still leave me in doubt," Holman replied. "There have been bad things, seemingly without end, said about those unhappy charities."

"I know," Miss Stowers replied, "and, frankly, I used to echo them."

Holman betrayed no surprise. "Your use of the past tense leads me to hope—" He hesitated.

"That I have changed my opinion?" she supplied. "I have. A little practical work among those poor people, a few visits to the East Side converted me. Your gifts relieve much suffering, but of course you know that and you must be aware of the great gratitude of your pensioners; you must have visited them to witness their pleasure."

Holman was thoughtful. "I regret the gifts are no greater," he answered modestly. "Some of the criticisms directed against them I dare say are deserved; in fact, I am sure of it, but there seems no middle ground for me; I must either give freely, the just and the unjust, the good and the bad, sharing alike, or else not give at all. I have tried to make improvements but I lack some one to direct the work and it is not possible for me to devote my own time to it. Those who are in charge do the best they can, but it requires some one who is wise and generous and patient and kind and I have not yet found those qualities equally developed in any man or woman willing to undertake the work."

"Why don't you apply for the place, Miss Harriet?" Pemberton suggested, lightly. "You know so much about those people down there." He spoke as if referring to a nether world.

Holman looked at her as he replied to Pemberton's remark. "If Miss Stowers were willing the question

would be solved." Harriet shook her head. "It would not be fair to ask it of you," Holman continued, "for you would be sure to devote all of your time to it and, as you have found out, undoubtedly, it is trying, depressing labor." He saw compassion trouble her soft brown eyes as the wind at sunset troubles a woodland pool. "But the task is always there waiting for you," he added, "and, of course, you would have no lack of assistants—what a misnomer, though, for they so often merely undo what one has done. There are so many things—nearly everything one's heart is set upon—that one must do alone. But in your own East Side work, Miss Stowers, if you come across cases where I can be of service I wish you would feel privileged to call upon me. I assure you that I would regard it as a favor. I may be able to be of some service and I would gladly help if I could."

Harriet wondered if this modest, thoughtful man could be the person she had so often heard described as a blatant, notoriety-seeking, self-advertising demagog. She thought of the bitterness with which she had heard him assailed and compared his own generous attitude toward his critics. She read in his words a lofty purpose not understandable to those who on their way downtown or up-town leaped over the intervening space between Twenty-third Street and the City Hall as over a gulf whose waters were polluted and who shunned the lower East Side as they might shun a city ravaged by a plague. She thanked Mr. Holman simply and sincerely.

"I am not capable of caring for such a great work," she said, "but I shall not forget your offer, Mr. Holman."

The two men left soon afterward. Holman, as they walked away was silent, busy with a vision that was lifting him out of conjecture. Certain of his plans were emerging from obscurity as a ship looms out of a fog, assuming definite shape. He paid no attention to the

young man at his side as Pemberton chattered on, delighted that his friend had made such an evidently favorable impression and rejoicing in the thought that his debts might now be considered cancelled.

About a week after their first call upon Miss Stowers, however, young Mr. Pemberton learned that Holman was not a creditor, like others he had made, who would be satisfied with something less than the full term of his bond. He and Holman had again called upon Miss Stowers and Holman with deference almost deprecatory had agreed to aid a fresh-air charity that claimed Miss Stowers' interest, a struggling infant of philanthropy which Holman's help—he asked as a favor to be allowed to show his approval—would enable to walk alone. This second meeting had been even more auspicious than the first and the day following it young Pemberton called at Holman's office ostensibly to congratulate Holman upon winning Harriet Stowers' high esteem, but, really, to receive his reward.

There had never been, of course, any intimation that the consideration for Holman's large loans was to be an introduction to Mrs. Van Alstyne, but Pemberton was clearly aware of the light in which Holman regarded the transaction and had been willing to accept the loans on such terms. He had been confident of his ability to put off payment indefinitely, but now he was no sooner in conference with the editor in the latter's inner office than he realized that it was a day of reckoning which, skilful as he was in dodging social obligations, he could no longer postpone.

"You have made a profound impression upon Miss Stowers," Pemberton told him.

"She is a magnificent type of womanhood," Holman answered, "intelligent, serious and yet delightfully human. If Miss Stowers is so charming, what, indeed, must her aunt, Mrs. Van Alstyne, be!"

Time and again he returned to the subject of Mrs.

Van Alstyne as persistently as though he were afflicted with onomatomania and her name was his particular obsession. Had Xavier, keeping watch at the door, overheard the interview he would have characterized Mr. Pemberton's conduct as shifty side-stepping. With pleasant stories and smiles of bland incomprehension the young man put off Holman's obvious openings to him to propose the desired introduction. But Holman, cool and resourceful, was beating him into a corner whence there was no escape. Though Pemberton ran free for a while like a horse escaped from the corral Holman's words again and again swung like a lasso over his neck and he was brought back.

On the desk before Holman were the notes—six in all—signed by Austin Pemberton. They might have been the accusatory exhibits in some action at law which Holman, as judge, was about to decide. In spite of the large amount of money they represented young Pemberton could have paid them without difficulty. Indeed, the borrowed money was now safely invested and drawing interest, but Pemberton had no intention of parting with this fortune. The displeasure of Mrs. Van Alstyne, he reflected, was a heavy price to pay, but his canny calculation told him that he had received more than its equivalent. He was no longer a penniless representative of a fine old Southern family, thankful to society for its favors; he was independent.

"How lucky it is we both come from Virginia," Holman said heartily. "My family moved away from there before you were born, but I dare say your grandfather and my grandfather played together as boys; only John Holman and his son and grandson moved to the West while Randolph Pemberton and his son, your father, remained in Virginia on their war-ruined plantation. The Holmans of Virginia—" he repeated the phrase; it had an impressive sound—"the Holmans of Virginia, you know, come of revolutionary stock. Your friend, Mrs.

Van Alstyne, might be interested in the genealogical fact."

They were again at the familiar turning in their spiral conversation, that wound round the name of Mrs. Van Alstyne, leading to a summit that young Pemberton could already see. This time he determined not to try to avoid the inevitable.

"I was speaking to Mrs. Van Alstyne about you only the other day," he said pleasantly, the little bird-eyes meeting Holman's squarely, the pink and white face rather pinker than usual.

"Oh, by the way," interrupted Holman as if he had not heard, "here are those notes of yours. Take them and tear them up; between friends such things are unnecessary."

He made a gesture as if to hold out the papers to Pemberton but suddenly releasing them, let them fall back on the desk.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "I didn't intend to interrupt. You were saying something about Mrs. Van Alstyne and me?"

Young Pemberton, who had stretched forth his plump, pink hand, withdrew it. He had correctly interpreted Holman's move.

"She was greatly interested," he continued. "Of course, she thinks you are an ogre with horns, ready to devour the innocents of Society. But, nevertheless, do you know, I think she wants to meet you." He paused. "It might be arranged."

"Excellent!" Holman slapped the palm of his hand with the paper-knife heartily as if the pleasing suggestion had come as a surprise. "There's nothing I should like better. I'll trust you, my dear Pemberton, to arrange it. If any one can present me with the proper credentials, it's you, Pemberton. You are the ambassador at the Court of the Queen. I am—what shall we say?—a distinguished traveller from a pagan country. Arrange it

when you will, where you will: whatever time and place for Her Majesty to receive me that the Protocol decrees. To tell the solemn truth, Pemberton, now that you've so kindly proposed it, I am more than anxious to meet Mrs. Van Alstyne and her friends. It isn't curiosity. Tell Mrs. Van Alstyne that, whatever sins I may have, curiosity is not among them. But I wish to meet her and her friends for the purpose of showing them that I am not a Vandal or a Hun, come to destroy. I've been somewhat too radical for their views, I suppose. My pabulum for the masses has been indigestible to Mrs. Van Alstyne and her associates in such quantities, but the Common People, my dear Pemberton, have to be stuffed. They can't be fed with a spoon."

His smile was confidential. Pemberton wondered why he had never before fully appreciated Holman's wit. If this rabid championship of the masses was half a pose, at least in its intensity, as Holman seemed to confess, why should not Society join in the excellent joke and welcome their scourge as the best of good-fellows? There was something exquisitely enticing to Pemberton in the prospect. Now Mrs. Van Alstyne, too, had a sardonic humor; perhaps she might enjoy, even to enthusiasm, the delicious drollery of it. In any event, he was too deeply committed to Holman to turn back or even hesitate. He must pay his debt to Holman without further delay, whatever the consequences. Holman had made an excellent impression upon Harriet Stowers; it was possible he might please Mrs. Van Alstyne; possible he reflected, but improbable. However, if Mrs. Van Alstyne were offended he must make the best of it. There was no other way out of his present situation. He smiled back at Holman's jest.

"If this superb weather continues there will be a golf tournament at Deep Glen tomorrow," he informed Holman. "Mrs. Van Alstyne will be there. Why can't you come down as my guest and I'll arrange to present you?"

"Done!" cried Holman. "Tomorrow get me at my home in Tenth street and we'll motor down together if the day is fine." Pemberton stood committed at last. Holman reflected that it had been more difficult than he anticipated to bend this resourceful, slippery young man to his will. He was a type new to Holman. But the thing had been done and well done. He pressed a button and Xavier appeared with his usual abruptness.

"Has Mr. Ellison come in?" The question approached the significance of a code between the two, and Xavier replied, as he always replied, in the affirmative. It was an answer that had sped many a lingering guest. Pemberton rose to leave. Xavier waited with his hand ready on the door.

"Oh, by the way," Holman remarked as his visitor was saying good-bye, "I'd almost forgotten those notes." He retraced his steps to the desk, returning with the papers which he placed in Pemberton's hands. A deeper red stole over the pink and white face of the society favorite and ebbed among the roots of his yellow hair. "Take them; burn them up," continued Holman, "or frame them as souvenirs. Yes, frame them as souvenirs, and we shall call them leaves in the book of our greater friendship."

"Very well, Holman; to our greater friendship. I like men who are open-handed and open-hearted. You have a royal way of bestowing favors that doesn't permit of dissent. With anybody else now——"

"Tut, Tut! Say no more about it."

Pemberton was hardly out of the building before Holman sent for Fernald. His rapid progress towards Mrs. Van Alstyne's brilliant camp had brought him face to face with the unpleasant task of restraining Fernald in his attacks upon those the *Epoch* was fond of calling the Insolent Idle Rich. Holman, his decision taken, never shrank from any disagreeable consequences that might be involved. He was wont to say that he ran

toward obstacles so that the momentum gained would help him to surmount them.

He was aware that it would be difficult to bring the editorial writer to his changed point of view for Fernald was allowed a free rein on the *Epoch* and its many allied and syndicated papers. His denunciations of the wealthy leisure class had struck a popular chord and Holman, encouraged by the leaping circulation of his papers, had been an enthusiastic abettor.

Fernald required no spur in his work of reformation. His early education at Heidelberg and at the Sorbonne and his later reading had saturated him with the communistic theories his clear style had made so popular to the readers of Holman's many papers. His sincere belief in the revolutionary gospel he preached made every line luminous. He had an abiding faith in the Common People and a contempt for their self-styled superiors. Mrs. Van Alstyne, because of her notorious divorce, had often been held up by the editorial writer as typifying the social grasshoppers he condemned, and this fact rendered it all the more imperative that Holman should lose no time in applying the curb.

Fernald obeyed the summons to his employer's room with unfeigned eagerness. The past week had held for him much pleasure; he saw the approaching fulfilment of a cherished vision. His editorials had been roseate with hope and he had hinted more than once to his faithful readers that the day of their deliverance was near at hand.

Holman put the case curtly. His words took the form almost of a peremptory order. The attacks upon Society and all that word stood for to the *Epoch's* readers, were to be less rabid and personalities, the keystone of the *Epoch's* popularity, were to be strictly avoided. At the first word Fernald had recoiled. He idolized Holman, blinding himself to short-comings that his close association had revealed. He was a student of books

rather than of men and long ago had convinced himself that Holman, although at times hampered by considerations not easily understood and influenced by obscure motives, was the true deliverer of the People.

"You can not tolerate the Idle Rich," Fernald expostulated. "They are the fruit of the tree at whose roots every blow we have struck has been aimed. They are the fruit and the flower; the cruel, unjust system of unequal privilege that begets them is the trunk and the branches on which they flourish, and the corruption, greed and favoritism on which that system stands are the roots. You cannot seek to fell the tree and yet praise its fruit." He paused. "They are as bad, in their way, as McQuade and his kind," he concluded, punctuating his speech with a vehement gesture as if he would have crushed the two evils with one blow.

"There is no need to tolerate or condone," Holman answered calmly. "I fear you have not quite grasped my meaning." Fernald's frown fled, for he, too, was doubtful if he had heard aright. "I have reason to believe that these people, many of whom are innocent creatures of circumstance, are already in a panic of apprehension over the election this fall. They consider us blind bigots, who are incapable of justice. We must take care, Fernald, in our zeal for the cause of the Common People, not to merit that reproach. We must recognize, if we are to deserve the name of honest judges, that all men, even those caught red-handed in crime, have their rights in the eyes of the law and we must not condemn indiscriminately. These people fear that victory for the cause we represent, particularly victory if I decide to run, will mean the wreck of their homes, the ruin of the country, an overthrow of the good and the bad together."

"It will be their ruin," broke in Fernald. "They will be swept away by the revolution. It means their ruin as much as the revolution of the *sans culottes* meant

the ruin of the Bourbon profligates and the end of their misrule." It was his favorite comparison. He walked up and down the room nervously.

Holman frowned but the shadow quickly passed. "Fernald," he said seriously, "there need be no compromise. I should be the first to oppose abating by one jot, anything of what the *Epoch* and my other papers have always insisted on, but, in the campaign about to begin, we must show ourselves generals and not merely fanatics. It requires infinitely greater genius to win a peaceful revolution than a revolution of bloodshed and ruin. Some of these people we condemn as a class are just as willing to help our cause as were some of the French aristocrats to aid the cause of the Third Estate. There may be among them, indeed I know there are, Philippe Egalités and Lafayettes."

Fernald made a gesture of impatience. "From the former Heaven save us; the latter we can do without," he said bitterly.

Holman did not heed the interruption. "If we would have allies, and we shall need all who will fight by our side," he continued, "we must treat them civilly, not boorishly. We must come to them with modulated voices arguing our case, not with cries of rage and indiscriminating hate. That is what I meant. Now leave this matter in my hands. If I am to lead in this campaign my generals must obey my orders." He smiled at Fernald in perfect trust but the devoted editorial writer shook his head sadly.

"David Holman," he cried in sudden exaltation, "the opportunity that has come to you is the greatest that has come to any man since the first Napoleon. We are in a modern world-climax, a crisis for which this suffering country has been waiting long and which, when it passes, will bring a change; whether that change is for the greater good or the infinite worse is in your hands. Your papers go into more than a million homes. Your voice

is heard by ten million people every day—ten million people who, in this land of liberty, are struggling for their freedom. In the morning on the way to their world's work, their work of bettering the land in which they live, they turn to you as the Indians turn toward the rising sun, and, in the evening, their day's work done, in the quiet of their homes, your papers in their tired hands, they harken to what you have to say, as peasants in the fields listen, with bowed heads, to the vesper bell. There must be no faltering, no compromise."

"There will be no compromise," Holman repeated solemnly. "I give you my promise there shall be no quarter. The surrender of the enemy shall be unconditional." He smiled again, and Fernald's face grew bright with pleasure. He believed in that promise absolutely.

"But I am the commander-in-chief and must direct the battle," Holman continued. "We are agreed on that?"

"That must be without question," assented the editorial writer.

"Very well then, until after the election let us avoid personalities and let us have no more attacks on local society. Hammer the Trusts and the Robber Barons who live in monopoly-turreted castles all you wish but as for these harmless but rather showy members of society, don't frighten them any more. Leave them out of your editorials altogether."

Ellison's soft knock sounded at the door. Holman recognized it and welcomed the interruption as the worn little city editor slipped in. Fernald's fears had been quieted; he would accept his instructions without question and would be careful not to disobey. The danger of affecting Holman's interest in the campaign would keep him to the very letter of Holman's commands.

"What is it, Mr. Ellison?" Holman asked.

"I wish to know if there are any special instructions for the Golf Tournament at Deep Glen tomorrow. Mrs. Van Alstyne is to be there and all the rest of them. I

suppose you wish the usual feature. I have had prepared pictures of Mrs. Van Alstyne, Mrs. Kirkland, and one or two others—very beautiful." The thin lips formed their nearest approach to a smile.

Holman looked sternly at the quiet little man. "I want a simple dignified account," he said. "I want nothing that could offend. Don't publish Mrs. Van Alstyne's picture. You can do as you like about the others." He shifted his eyes to Fernald and in his glance was a challenge. He would make his mastery more pronounced.

"Mrs. Van Alstyne is a friend of mine," he added.

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH A WOMAN INTERFERES WITH POLITICS

Riefsnider, whose quick eyes saw many things and whose active imagination made from the things he saw deductions that were, in the main, correct, observed Austin Pemberton leaving the *Epoch* office and, later in the day, met the same young gentleman under conditions that lent wings to his fancy. The day had been one of those rare ones when Riefsnider confessed to fatigue and, as a solace, he rested for a breathing space in a comfortable Fifth Avenue book-store where often he passed an unfilled half-hour examining the books that were dear to him and that never failed to fill him with a pleasant wonder.

So absorbed had he become in this communion that he did not at once notice a young woman at his elbow engaged in the same occupation, and it was with a start that he recognized in his neighbor, Miss Harriet Stowers. The book in his hand was forgotten. As the girl stood there unconscious of his regard, the street door opened and Austin Pemberton bustled in briskly. He was on the point of giving an order to the clerk when he, too, observed Miss Stowers. His round face lighted with surprise and he came toward her eagerly.

"Why, Miss Harriet," he cried, "What good luck! I was on my way to your house."

"Then I may take you there," she answered smilingly, "as soon as I get some books. I have just this moment dropped in to find something to read. You are so good with suggestions, can't you advise me?"

He took the book she held in her hand. "Henry

George!" he exclaimed. "No, I am much too frivolous, but I can see the influence upon you of one who preaches a part of Henry George's gospel."

Her glance held an inquiry and Riefsnider's startled ears heard Pemberton's response: "David Holman; evidently he has made an impression. It was about him I wished to see you."

The two moved to a farther end of the counter, continuing the conversation with lowered voices. Miss Stowers' animated laugh came to where Riefsnider stood and he heard Pemberton, with a show of excitement, say to his companion:

"I've trusted to you to persuade your aunt to go with us to Deep Glen."

"What! Aunt Cornelia!" Miss Stowers laughed in astonishment.

"Oh no, not she; Mrs. Kirkland," Pemberton assured her, sharing her mirth.

They completed their purchases and left the store together, and, soon after, Riefsnider, pondering, made his way down-town. Two hours later, while his mind was still busy with speculations inspired by this fragmentary conversation, Riefsnider caught sight of Jacob Mendell, who served Holman in the capacity of political lieutenant and confidential secretary, on his way to Holman's house. And from these encounters the reporter drew conclusions regarding David Holman's present activities which were not far from the truth.

"Society, politics and newspapers will keep the Chief pretty busy," was his mental comment. "But, after all, they are three horses that should go smoothly enough together, especially when driven by money. And if any one can ride them, it's the Chief," he added, with conviction.

Mendell tried to avoid the reporter by crossing the street, but Riefsnider was too near, so he reconsidered his intention and, turning back, held out his fat hand.

Riefsnider had observed the attempted evasion and argued from it that Mendell was on another of those missions he was so frequently entrusted with and about which always hung something of mystery.

"Going to see the Chief, eh?" he asked. "How's politics?"

"Search me!" replied Mendell idiomatically, shrugging his shoulders so that the Semitic stood out more pronouncedly. "The Chief has great ideas of reforming the country and helping what-you-might-call the down-trodden laboring man." He spoke patronizingly. "I try to get him to give it up. It's too expensive."

Mendell had once been the "star" political reporter of the *Epoch*. During Holman's congressional campaign he had made himself valuable to his employer with certain politicians of doubtful honesty and ever since then had occupied an indeterminate position. He was often absent on missions ostensibly connected with the Holman syndicate of papers, but Riefsnider and others held the belief that on such missions Holman's newspapers received only part and, perhaps, a small part of Mendell's attention. There was something cunning and hidden about the man that lent strength to this conviction.

"The Chief is not apt to consider expense, except when it concerns the office," Riefsnider retorted. He eyed Mendell contemptuously. "If the Chief is bent on reforming something he should begin, like Charity, at home. He is taking on new cheap men and letting the old, faithful ones go. He's just let Redmond out."

"He has?" Mendell affected a solicitous interest. He, the practical, had nothing in common with Redmond, the dreamer.

"Yes," Riefsnider continued. "And, Mendell, you may not know it, and it may have to be told to you, but Redmond was the whitest, squarest man on the *Epoch* and could write rings round any other man on the staff."

"Of course, of course," Mendell assented eagerly: He

was writhing and wriggling under Riefsnider's eulogy. "Redmond is what-you-might-call a genius." He took off his hat, brushing back his thick black, wiry, curly hair. The rays from a swinging arc-light glistened on his damp forehead. "It's getting warm." He changed the subject of conversation. "It's the first day of real summer. Well, so long;" he put on his hat with a show of suddenly remembered, pressing business. "I've got an appointment." He paused, balancing his vanity and caution; the former weighed down the scales. "I'm dining with the Chief to-night; a little conference," he flung after him as he hurried along the street.

"Damn fresh," he muttered when he was safely out of hearing. "I'm glad Redmond's got it. He ought to have been 'soaked' long ago. He's a loafer. And I'd like to see Riefsnider get it, too. He's too fresh."

Riefsnider continued his way eastward. At Second avenue he turned south. The night was oppressive with unseasonable heat, and the stars shone near and white above the cañons of the streets. People were filling the avenues, strolling leisurely or hurrying to up-town theatres. The street cars were crowded; their gongs clanged heavily on the night air. It was the half-hour the reporter hated. Riefsnider loved the burden of newspaper work; its heavy harness rarely galled him. There were days when the labor was light and others when the work seemed never to end, and he found some recompense in it all. But on occasions when he was tired and depressed, as he was tonight, the sight of so many people, their day's work done, rushing eagerly to places of amusement or to homes where the cares of yesterday and tomorrow were for a time forgotten, made intolerable to him the idea of returning to the office to toil until long after the pleasure seekers, sated, had gone to their rest to fit themselves for another day.

Tonight Riefsnider was out of sorts. The day had gone wrong; despite the sunshine it had been for him

one of those gray days when the candles we light in the morning burn murkily through the vapors and fail to illumine. The chance encounter with Mendell served further to depress him. He contrasted Mendell, who had been exalted, with Redmond, who had been dismissed. He admired Redmond, the big-hearted dreamer, with all the openness of his frank nature and to have his friend thus unceremoniously discharged, wounded him deeply.

Riefsnider turned into Patsy's saloon sure of finding sympathy there, for Patsy was a mild philosopher whose quiet humor never grew stale or sour and who excelled in the rare art of listening. Patsy's admiration for newspaper men grew from his reverence for the printed page, for he was a poet without opportunity, a singer who had been denied words. In the intervals between serving drinks he committed Byron to memory from a beloved volume that rested, during the busy hours, not inappropriately, upon the champagne glasses. He had even tried his own hand at verse and some of his measures, thundering out a defiance to Erin's foes, had been published, to Patsy's eternal joy, in the *Green Flag of Freedom*.

Riefsnider greeted Patsy mechanically. "Redmond's been fired," he announced gloomily as he raised his glass.

"No! What for?" The bartender was at once all interest.

"For nothing at all; that's the worst part of it; for doing his work well; for keeping sober; for having more brains than any other man in the *Epoch* shop, unless it's Fernald—just fired because he was a little too high-priced and somebody could be found who would do his work, after a fashion, for less."

"What?" cried Patsy, with an affectation of astonishment, "Can it be that this is the work of that Protector of the People, the Champion of Liberty, the Savior of the Down-trodden Laboring Man? Perish the thought! O! to what base uses have we come!"

Riefsnider nodded his head and smiled wryly. "Yes," he agreed, "that's the way I feel about it. He's a lovely, a beautiful philanthropist! Patsy, I'm sick of it!"

The bar-tender laughed. "Of course you're sick of it; so am I. Everybody must get sick of it. But what can we do? We are the fleas on the dog. I suppose even the Boss across the street gets sick of it, although he is one of the dogs and not one of the fleas. The best you and I can do, Gus, is to watch the game quietly from our little hiding places and take care not to excite the dog."

Riefsnider leaned confidentially on the bar. The drink had brightened his spirits.

"You're right, Patsy." He winked omnisciently. "There's nothing we can do about it, but, if I have to be one of the fleas, I intend to ride with the biggest dog and I am going to select the snuggest cosy-corner. I tell you, there are things doing, Patsy; mark my words; watch for 'em. The Chief's been as busy as an ant in a sand-hill. He'll be spreading out, too. There's a gentleman who is just arriving, Patsy. He's got nerve; he isn't afraid of the devil in the dark. And he's got more money than you can count. He gets what he goes after, Patsy, for what he hasn't got he can buy. I know him, all right, Patsy, and he knows me, and you can take it from me, my boy, that, before very long, you'll hear something drop." The reporter helped himself to more whiskey. "It's coming, Patsy," he continued, "as sure as you're a foot high; the circus is coming to town and you and I want to be in the parade. I can understand Bob Redmond—he would shun it as the devil shuns holy-water; poor old Bob. He's a dreamer and he believes it's possible to wipe out graft and for everybody to live by the Golden Rule; but as for me, Patsy, I'm like you; I take things as I find 'em and, when the parade starts, I'm going to be up with the band-wagon!"

"And playing your own horn," put in the bar-tender,

beaming broadly on his friend. He knew how much was substance and how much mere air in Riefsnider's talk.

"I wish, Gus," said Patsy when the reporter was leaving, "you would tell Bob Redmond to come round and see me. If he's hard up, you know, I can stake him until he gets another job."

Patsy had for Redmond the warm friendship of a fellow poet. He might not reach literary heights but, at least, he could take delight in playing the part of Maecenas to a struggling Horace out of work.

While Riefsnider labored hard at the office expending his effort drudgingly as a farmer finishes the furrow before the last at the end of a long day, Jacob Mendell dined with his Chief. To Mendell it was a wonderful dinner, not so much because of the quality or quantity of the things to eat and drink, as for the opportunity it gave him to sit at the board opposite his employer in the semblance of equality with a man worth millions, of whose far-reaching power no one was better able to judge than he. His vanity dilated with the consciousness of success, self-sufficiency shining from his fat hands, his round polished face and his wiry hair. Warmed by the wine he sought while at table to discuss the results of his latest trip, eager to boast of the work he had accomplished, but Holman checked him peremptorily.

"We'll talk about that afterward, Mr. Mendell," he said, "when we are alone and will not be interrupted by the servants." Whatever flattering caresses Mendell might give to his soul Holman held him as a servant, a useful, capable, not over-honest servant, and he never assumed toward the man who was now his guest an attitude that might cause Mendell's eager vanity to forget this relationship.

After dinner Holman led the way upstairs to his library passing through a hall hung with tapestries and

dim with the light struggling through the dull glass of antique lanterns. In this half-light he seemed more than ever a giant to Mendell's appreciative eyes; a giant swarthy and straight as an Indian chief. Holman entered the library first with a brief "Come in" to his guest as if he had expected the man to wait at the threshold until invited. The room exhaled a soothing odor of leather, suggesting books pleasant to the touch and comfortable chairs inviting long hours of reading. Except for the light falling on the table and on the two large leather chairs on either side of it, the room was in shadow. Holman motioned Mendell to one of these seats and took the other, indicating a box of cigars and a small, burning spirit-lamp on the table. Mendell lighted his cigar and leaned back luxuriously.

"Now then," said Holman, "what have you done?"

Mendell went through his story glibly, interspersing it with innumerable "what-you-might-calls," his stuttering phrase that gave breathing space to co-ordinate his thoughts and form his sentences; it was one of those conversational halting-places of men whose words come too slowly or too fast for their ideas. Mendell's story was long. He had been away from New York three months, and in that time had gone carefully over the ground where Holman had sent him. He had surveyed the field where the battle was to be fought and posted artillery at the important positions. Every man he had seen, owing an allegiance to Holman, stood ready to fight for his interests. All that was needed was the signal when these men would unmask their batteries and take their part in the conflict assigned to them by Holman. There would be no lack of the ammunition of argument and praise. All over the land the people should hear the war-cry for a new leader. It should resound in every home; it should be on every lip. People should hear the old leaders denounced as failing in their duty; incompetent; perhaps faithless. The masses should be

made to feel that the new cry was but an echo of their own discontent. The demand for Holman should be their own demand.

There was no need for Mendell to attempt eloquence. The figures he presented were convincing arguments of how thoroughly his work had been done. There was not one man in the list he had carried with him that he had not seen. There was not a detail in his instructions that he had slighted or omitted. He was sharp and crafty and tireless. He knew the heart of every man to whom he had been sent. They were in Holman's employ or indebted to Holman and could be counted upon to obey orders. And they would do their work so deftly that no one would gain the impression that it was premeditated. It was to be the spontaneous Voice of the People demanding that a new general lead them in the approaching conflict.

Mendell was observant. In his trips throughout the country, among the farmers of the great middle West, among the storekeepers, bankers and small merchants of the town, among the great masses of toilers in the cities, he had seen and heard much. He had seen the awakening of the conscience of a nation; he had heard the Voice of the People. He had heard it everywhere; it was always the same. In the factories, in the shops, on the farms he had seen faces that wore identical expressions of discontent; the earthward gaze of those without horizon; and he had heard the same tones of dissatisfaction. He caught words and recognized them as catch phrases of Fernald: "Predatory Plutocracy," "the Plundered People," "Rights of the Many," "Government by the Favored Few," "Unequal Opportunities."

He summed it up to Holman. "It's what-you-might-call a tide rising higher and higher. It's sweeping along over all parts of the country I've been in. It's a tide, sir, like the tide round Plum Gut up the Sound. You've seen it sir? It comes in with a roar."

Holman listened, the light falling on his face and hair. One hand rested on the table before him firmly, the other supported his chin, the fingers long, powerful and muscular spread out widely. Mendell paused for encouragement.

"You are right, Mr. Mendell," Holman said. "It is a flood and one that will carry away the Johnstown in which our friends, the Plutocrats of Privilege, have lived so long in security. It is a rising tide that will mount steadily higher and higher. You have observed carefully and have done your work well."

Mendell exuded self-contentment. His wiry hair seemed to curl tighter.

"What are these people saying or, what is more to the point, what are they thinking, about the coming election?" Holman asked.

"They are for Abner Heyward now," said Mendell. He saw the shadow, flitting as it was, pass over the face of his employer and added quickly, "but they're what-you-might-call luke-warm. Heyward isn't radical enough for them. What they'd like to have, sir, is for you to run. It's you they really want and as soon as the word is given, you'll see how they'll take it up. They want a leader, sir, and they'd rather have you than a dozen Heywards."

The flush ebbed from Holman's face and he proceeded to the real business he had brought Mendell there for, but first, he allowed a pause to ensue and he appeared to be contemplating.

"Mr. Mendell," he said at length, "You've done your work well. You've shown judgment and discretion. For this reason I am going to entrust you with a more delicate mission. I want you to go to certain districts—I'll give you a list—and see the editors of certain newspapers that I do not control, some of them are even hostile to me. I want you to find out just how they are leaning in their politics; whether they are staunch or wobbly. I want

you to learn what they think of the situation. That will be easy enough. But I want you to do something more that will require the exercise of the nicest diplomacy."

Mendell's beady eyes widened with curiosity and expectancy.

"I want you," continued Holman, "to find out the financial standing of these men. I want to know which ones owe money. I want you to learn by discreet inquiry, perhaps as an intending purchaser, perhaps as a commercial traveller, perhaps as the representative of a mercantile agency, or some one like that—use your own method—but I want to know how these newspapers are situated financially. Is that clear?" Holman paused for a reply.

"Yes sir, yes sir," breathed Mendell eagerly.

"Very well. While you are making these inquiries which must be done accurately and swiftly,—you must report to me in six weeks from this date,—I want you to find out how much these men generally get from their campaign committees during a presidential campaign, whether they are satisfied with the amount they receive and whether they would——" he hesitated for a word—"they would be influenced by a loan or an advertisement or the guarantee of extra subscribers, or, if necessary, the purchase of part of their paper."

Mendell breathed heavily. He saw the large responsibilities in the work, the possibilities, not only for himself, but for Holman, that it contained.

"I shall rely on you, Mr. Mendell, to exercise great diplomacy," cautioned Holman. "There must be no hint of coercion, no suggestion of—" He hesitated before the ugly word—"not the faintest suggestion of bribery. Anything that is done must be done in a strictly business way. There is nothing to prevent a newspaper proprietor selling all or part of his newspaper at any time, or accepting money from campaign committees for new

subscriptions, or demonstrating his friendliness for his principal advertisers."

He smiled blandly, guilelessly, and Mendell smiled back. It was the nearest to Holman's confidence he had ever been. He fancied that, for an instant, he saw the mask dropping from that dark heroic countenance. Holman bent forward impressively. When he spoke next his voice was so low that any one further away from him than Mendell could not have heard. He had carefully led up to the vital point.

"And one other thing, Mr. Mendell," he added, "the most important of all. In the list, are the names of certain delegates to the national convention. Find out the same things about them; their financial standing, their circumstances; what pressure might be brought to bear; how they are likely to vote." He paused. "I wish to impress upon you," he said, "that this is the most important part of your work. You will not have much time. If you find it necessary to neglect any part of what I have given you to do, let it be that relating to the newspapers. But on no account fail to inform yourself about these delegates."

A servant tapped lightly at the door.

"What is it?" called Holman, without rising. The butler entered and closed the door softly behind him.

"A lady to see you, sir," he announced.

Holman glanced instinctively at a clock set in a crystal ball before him on the desk. It marked eleven.

"A lady, to see me?" he inquired incredulously.

"Yes, sir," the servant answered. He volunteered no further information and Holman asked for none. Instructing Mendell to wait he left the room. Outside, the servant when he had closed the door gently, said in a low voice:

"It's Mrs. Sylvestre, sir."

Holman betrayed his annoyance. He ran lightly down the steps and crossed the hall into the drawing room.

Mrs. Sylvestre sat on a tapestried settee and smiled at him defiantly as he entered. Her severe tailor suit set off her neat figure well, and her plumed hat was tilted in the fashion of the hour over her eyes and over her elaborate coiffure. She had not removed her boa and sat, cuddled in it, her dark face ivory and her eyes jewels in the subdued light.

"Zaidee!" Holman's tone was one of protest.

"Oh, zut," she pouted elaborately. "Why are you going to scold? I called up the office and they said you were here."

"Who said that?" he asked ominously.

"Never mind," she laughed, "I've my friends there as well as you. You haven't been near me for almost a week and I'm frightfully lonesome. Captain asks every day if you're not coming to see him. I thought I'd come by and get you. I've my car outside. Can't you come?"

She had risen and as she spoke she walked toward him, ending her appeal by resting her hands on his shoulders and turning up her face so like the portrait by Sargent, to his. He bent low over it, his anger gone.

"Has Captain been a good boy?" he asked tenderly.

"Yes, except that he teases constantly for his Amigo."

"I've been very busy with politics and the newspapers," the man explained. "These are busy times."

"Always busy," she pouted. "Amigo, are they going to make you president? Are they going to make my Amigo and Captain's Amigo president?" She looked at him proudly and held him at arm's length, her admiring gaze enfolding him. But a shadow crossed her face, banishing the light of joy. "I've heard they were, Amigo; I read it in a paper. And if they do, what will become then of your Captain and your Zaidee?"

For answer, he put an arm round her and, lifting her chin in his strong hand, kissed her. "Nonsense," he said. "It's only silly talk."

The woman's mood changed again. "I was so lonely.

It's very lonesome there when Captain's asleep. I see so very little of you. I'd rather they wouldn't make you president, Amigo, if it will take you away from me." Her lip trembled. "I couldn't bear anything that would take you away from me." He stroked her shoulder as one caresses a child afraid of the dark, but he did not answer except to repeat again, "Nonsense." Some recollection stirred the woman for a quick fire leaped into her eyes, a dangerous gleam that chased away the softening low tones from her beautiful face and made it cruel and threatening.

"Have you been with that silly Mr. Pemberton any more?" she asked.

He threw back his head and laughed his youthful laugh, infectious and reassuring.

"Oh, that's it," he said. "Jealousy! Well, be tranquil, Mamacita, your fears are without foundation."

"Have you seen him?" she repeated.

"No." He looked at her steadily, still smiling.

"Nor that brazen Miss Stowers?"

"No." He laughed outright, then his tone changed to one of reproof. "Zaidee, you mustn't come here at this hour. I've already told you so, Mamacita. You mustn't come here at all. It'll not do. But above all, you mustn't come here at this time of night. You're no longer the little girl you were before you went to France. Imagine what people will think."

"What do I care what people think?" she flared. "Have I ever cared? And it's too late to begin now. Once you didn't care. You even laughed at me for suggesting that our neighbors had opinions. But lately you have changed. You have become careful of what people say. You seem to want to hide me and to hide Captain."

He held up his hand to stop her. "There, there," he said. "Don't go into one of your tantrums. There is no harm done, but it is not so far from midnight and I really can't have it. It isn't exactly as it once was, Zaidee. I'm

more widely known than I was then and this isn't Paris, you know. I've lots of enemies. We must pay more attention to old Mrs. Grundy than we have been doing. You know what they have already said."

The woman was ready for battle. "I didn't care when it hurt me," she said petulantly, "and then you didn't think it could make any difference to you. Are you going to care, now that you find that it may hurt *you*?"

He looked at her steadily. "You're a bad little girl and, I suppose, I should punish you but, instead——" He raised her face and again bent his lips to hers. She was seized with a sudden paroxysm of sobbing. He held her as she wept and until she regained control of herself.

"I am hateful, Amigo. I wouldn't do anything that could harm you for the world. I wouldn't wish you to suffer through me but, sometimes, I fear you will grow away from your Zaidee and—and I have been, oh, so lonely." She broke forth into a fresh torrent of tears.

When he had quieted her she begged him to leave the house with her if only to see Captain for a moment as he slept, but he shook his head firmly.

"I'd love nothing better," he assured her, "for my absence from you and Captain has meant as much to me as it has meant to you, but, tonight, I must work. I've a man upstairs waiting for me now. We were deep in important business when you came."

She knew that his refusals were final and that pleading never changed him. With a show of annoyance she made her way into the hall.

"Very well," she said. "Then I'm coming here whenever I get lonely."

He drew her back into the drawing room.

"You mustn't come here," he said. "Please don't do it, for my sake." He held out his hand to her in a spirit of comradeship. "Promise me you'll wait until after the convention; it's only a few weeks off. After that we can see our way more clearly and I shall not be so busy."

For answer she raised her lips again to his, tears of remorse still dimming her eyes.

As they reentered the hall he released her hands and watched the outer door close behind her. Thoughtfully he ascended the stairs to the library. When he entered the room he resumed his seat without apology or excuse to the waiting Mendell. From a drawer in the desk he took a folded paper.

"Here is the list of the men I want you to see, Mr. Mendell, and the papers I want you to inquire about. I shall explain it to you."

Until far into the night they went over the names together, Holman repeating his instructions with painstaking care. He gave his opinions on the conditions in each locality and on the men whose influence and good will he was about to bid for. His survey of the situation showed how minutely he had studied his ground. When Mendell left the house the early morning wagons were rumbling in the street. He had the list in his pocket and Holman's final words were buzzing in his ears:

"But above all, you must see these delegates. Make friends with them. Get close to them. I shall expect you to exercise the best of judgment and discretion. I want you to regard this as a diplomatic mission."

CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH A RESCUER MAKES HIS TIMELY APPEARANCE

Zaidee Sylvestre, restored to a measure of tranquility by Holman's words and caresses, was no sooner away from him than she was again tormented by doubt and the vague fear that some misfortune was impending to change their long-existing relations. On her way from Holman's house she summoned what little ability she possessed to reason calmly and connectedly and tried to submit her forebodings to the test, making a brave effort to convince herself that they were without foundation. Reviewing the meagre facts, she could discover nothing to justify her misgivings and she repeated over and over to herself, half-audibly, as she leaned back in a corner of the automobile, hidden in the darkness, her face buried in her boa, assurances that, in spite of repetition, brought no comfort. The feline in the woman was evident in her every move; in her more animated moods she was the tiger, fierce, agile, cruel; in her quieter moments, the cat, arched and purring, cuddling into cosy attitudes. In the darkness, with only her eyes shining out through the fur, she now tried to banish from her thoughts the possibility of Holman's desertion, but every fresh fact marshaled to convince her of her error served only to strengthen her belief that her apprehension had not painted the future too black. Her intuition swept aside the barriers she sought to raise against her unreasoned convictions.

When she arrived at her home Zaidee ran frightenedly, without removing her wrap, to the nursery where Captain lay asleep in a small medallioned bed. She bent over

the delicate face, the deep-set eyes now closed, fringed by long dark lashes. For many moments she stood there, her tears falling and broken sobs shaking her.

"Oh, he couldn't leave you, my precious little Captain," she cried.

The boy stirred uneasily. The mother stepped swiftly back and, when she saw him drop again into peaceful slumber, tiptoed out of the room.

Wearily she allowed the maid to help her into one of the negligée garments she affected. It was late, the long intervals between the passing cars, the rare sound of a carriage, marking an hour well past midnight. She took up a book but soon put it down again, for reading had been to her always an excitement rather than a solace. She walked about the room aimlessly, occasionally pausing before Holman's portrait or before the portrait of the little boy whose wistful face the painter had admirably put on canvas. More often she stopped before the long mirror drawing close to it and examining with microscopic attention her features in the glass. Tiring of these diversions she turned out the light and lay down upon a divan, drawing over her a silk coverlet from the bed. Hardly was the room in darkness before she rose and switched on the light again. Rest or relaxation, or sleep seemed alike impossible to her. She stood before her toilet-table examining the familiar articles of ivory and gold in a vain endeavor to stimulate her interest. Once or twice she returned to the boy's room, but was not long gone. At last she sank into a chair and surrendered herself to the dark thoughts against which she had been contending. From self pity her mind took up the more enlivening prospect of retaliation. Her eyes grew brighter and rounder and her full lower lip flattened mercilessly against her teeth. She sat there long trying to forecast the morrow as a general might plan his attack the night before battle. Dawn was revealing the streets and houses and the sky shone a sickly blue, cold

and cheerless, when she crept into bed. She heard a man whistling gaily as he passed. She did not know—so nearly our little spheres, revolving in their separate orbits touch without our being aware of it, that it was Mendell, whistling in pleasurable satisfaction on his way home from David Holman's.

Zaidee's restlessness was not to be banished by going to bed. She tossed upon the disturbed sea of her thoughts finding no haven where she might lie quietly. She tried her youthful experiments of counting jumping sheep, or repeating a curious little Spanish rhyme she had been taught in childhood. These and other expedients were futile and, at last, abandoning them, she propped herself upon her pillows and, folding her hands, waited for the day.

As soon as the world outside was stirring she summoned a kitchen maid and had her telephone to the stables for her saddle horse. She rose and dressed, donning, without her maid's usual assistance, the riding coat and skirt. Before the groom had arrived with her mare, Gila, a gift from Holman, and long before Captain was awake in the nursery, she had descended the stairs and was waiting impatiently.

Once astride the mare, her attention fully occupied in commanding the animal, the troubled thoughts of the night left her. The morning was crisp and frosty with a touch of early fall in it rather than of the summer at hand. On the car tracks in the street, on the windows of houses and on the polished brasses of doors and railings, the bright sun glinted. Zaidee drew a breath of freedom. After all it was good to be moving about in a world so beautiful. Gila seemed to share the exhilaration of her rider, stepping high and tossing her head impatiently during the slow progress to the park.

When they had entered the bridle-path and were racing along over its soft surface Zaidee threw back her head triumphantly. In her mastery of the spirited

beast she bestrode she felt there was symbolized a victory over imagined difficulties. The very springiness of the dirt path made the spiritual world seem less hard and more yielding. She held her mare with a tight rein, but the animal galloped swiftly as if to keep pace with her rider's flying thoughts. They had taken the path at the east side of the park and were at its northern end before Zaidee slackened the speed, conscious, at last, that her night of sleeplessness had rendered her unusually susceptible to fatigue.

They came down the west bridle-path slowly. With the change of speed came a change in the woman's thoughts. As Gila walked along under the gray, leafless trees, Zaidee fell to brooding over prospective wrongs vividly pictured by her over-wrought imagination. She felt keenly her humiliation and the desire for revenge leaped to flame within her. Spurred by impulse and not intending, indeed, unaware of, what she did, Zaidee cut Gila savagely with her crop. The animal, startled by the unaccustomed blow, leaped in terror, reared, then lowered her head and bolted at full run down the path.

So unpremeditated had been Zaidee's action that, for a moment, she did not realize the cause of Gila's fright and was almost unseated by the sudden leap forward. The bridle reins had been jerked from her hand and the maddened animal was now without control and was racing, head down, under the trees with hoofs beating on the path, the sleek sorrel barrel of the mare's body lying low and even like some golden flying machine skimming the earth's surface. Zaidee had no thought of peril to herself. She realized that a hanging bough might sweep her from her mount or that the mare might forsake the path and run wild in the park or along the drive, but such dangers seemed remote, for Gila would probably keep to that drab ribbon of dirt road running like a muddy river between banks of green. She thrilled with an excitement that outweighed all fear. After two or

three vain efforts to regain the reins, she had given up any attempt to control the mare except by her voice and, as they rushed through the park, she spoke to the frightened animal, calling her name repeatedly. Suddenly as she raised her eyes from Gila's head she saw in front of her a high stone barrier, flanked by trees and shrubbery. Her heart stopped beating. The meaning of violent death, the horror of mutilation, came suddenly over her. She sickened with fear. Exhilaration gave way to terror. Then the horse swept into the darkness and was out again, in an instant, into the sunshine. She had forgotten the tunnel through which the bridle path goes under the cross-street. The shimmering light and the flying trees seemed to her like coming into another world so certain had she been of death. The reaction, the sudden relief, made her faint. She grasped the pommel of the saddle for support. Slowly she became aware that another horse was coming up from behind, racing as was Gila, but gaining on her. She remembered she had heard the sound long ago but confused it with the beating of her own mare's hoofs. Presently she heard a man's voice, low, but clear and commanding:

"Sit steady," it ordered. "Don't try to jump; you're all right; sit steady."

She saw the outstretched head of his horse reach her mare's flank, then come gradually abreast. She noticed, like an instantaneous photograph in which every detail is caught, that the horse's head was black and finely modelled and that the veins stood out upon the neck like tendons. Then she saw a man's large, strong hand and black-coated arm reach forward, slowly, slowly, and at last seize her mare's bridle close to the bit. She heard his muttered command as he drew back, and there stole over her a numbness as if she had lost the sense of feeling. Murkily she knew that Gila's pace was slackening. Distantly she heard some one say: "It's all right, now." Then the trees grew dark and indistinct and the

path faded and she seemed to be falling. She felt an arm about her. Desperately, as a person under water struggles for the surface, she fought to retain consciousness and, as if borne upward by her undirected efforts, she rose out of the translucent depths and saw clearly the barren trees, the grass, the path, her mare, trembling with fright but subdued under her and the man at her side with one hand on Gila's bridle and his other firmly grasping her arm.

"I hope you are not hurt," he said anxiously. "You behaved splendidly. If you will allow me to say so, you are very brave."

There was something so earnest in his voice that the compliment lost its touch of flattery. It was a pleasant voice resonant and full and musical. His face was good humored, sensitive and kindly, the mouth large and straight, the nose slightly turned upward, the eyes blue, wide and frank. Beneath the brim of his hat his hair brown-red and thick, waved. The black coat and riding breeches revealed a sturdy, closely-knit figure. As Zaidee tried to thank him she recalled having seen him before, riding in the park in the early mornings. She remembered his easy mastery of the superb black he rode.

A policeman who had seen the runaway and had followed the fleeing pair at top speed came up and made inquiries. Although Zaidee maintained she had suffered no injury, the policeman insisted on taking her name in order to make a formal report.

"It isn't necessary, officer," her companion interposed. He had been searching in his pockets and now, producing a card-case, handed his card to the policeman. The change in the uniformed man's attitude was at once apparent. He saluted and said:

"I'm new to the park, Mr. O'Malley. I didn't recognize you. They told me you'd be after riding in the mornings."

Mr. O'Malley smiled pleasantly. "They know my

habits, then," he commented. The policeman returned the smile and proffered his aid, but when Mr. O'Malley, thanking him, declined, he saluted and rode off to his post.

Zaidee had been conscious of a dull increasing pain in her right foot. She tried to shift it in the stirrup, but the slightest movement was so agonizing that the feeling of faintness came over her again. Mr. O'Malley noticed the young woman's pallor.

"Your mare is a strong animal and is not nearly winded," he said. "She is still restive. Will you allow me to accompany you until you are sure of her again?"

She was glad to have him ride by her side for the pain in her foot was rapidly becoming unbearable. He introduced himself with a quaint, old-fashioned formality.

"May I present myself?" he asked. "I am Emmet O'Malley."

As she searched her memory Zaidee recalled that she had seen the name in the newspapers.

"The District Attorney?" she asked.

"At your service," O'Malley answered.

"I am Mrs. Sylvestre," she said. He raised his hat solemnly.

Before the park entrance at Fifty-ninth street was reached Zaidee could no longer conceal her suffering.

"I have hurt my foot," she said. "The horses were so close together it may have been bruised."

"I had better see you to your home," Mr. O'Malley replied, and, without waiting for her permission, asked "Where do you live?"

She gave him the number of her house in Madison avenue.

"I fear, though," she said, "I shall have to rest somewhere. Couldn't we find a drug-store where they could do something to relieve the pain?"

He noticed that she was speaking with difficulty and was biting her lips to keep back expressions of anguish.

He saw, too, that she was very pale and that drops of perspiration stood out upon her forehead. Instinctively he caught hold of her arm, lest she should faint and fall.

"My foot hurts me frightfully," she confessed. She did not hear his solicitous questions or, if she did, was unable to reply to them. The way to the pharmacy seemed interminable. When the horses stood before the shop-door she said to her escort, "I believe I must ask you to help me dismount." He was on the ground by her in an instant. She tried to lift her injured foot from the stirrup, gave a gasp of pain and Mr. O'Malley caught her as she fell unconscious.

When her senses returned he was still beside her and Zaidee realized, by the profusion of bottles, that she was in a rear room of the pharmacy. Standing with Mr. O'Malley and looking down at her was a man whom she supposed to be a surgeon. It was Mr. O'Malley who spoke first.

"You're all right now," he said. It was the second time she had heard him speak thus, reassuring her as one with authority. His voice carried with it such comfort and strength that she closed her eyes that it might the better soothe her. When she opened them again she smiled up at him contentedly.

"I am so much better now," she assured him. "Was I much hurt?"

"Only a severe contusion." It was the surgeon who answered her. "A bad bruise but, fortunately no bones broken. You will have to remain in bed a few days and then you'll be all right."

"I thank you both very much." She turned her eyes to Mr. O'Malley. "You have been extremely kind."

"If you will permit me," he said, "I'll send for a carriage and take you to your home. You will have to be carried into the house, you know. Is there any one you wish to send for or to notify? Is there any one at your home it might alarm?"

"No, there is no one." She looked away from him and there was a pause before she continued. "My little boy is there, but he is young, and I can have the maid bring him to the carriage and make a jest of it, so that he will not be frightened." She was silent again.

When the carriage came Mr. O'Malley and the surgeon lifted Zaidee in an improvised stretcher to her place. The injured foot had been dressed and bandaged and the pain was no longer acute. Mr. O'Malley, taking a place by her side, directed the coachman to the Madison avenue address she had given.

They turned north from Fifty-ninth street into Madison avenue. At Sixty-fifth street the tooting horn of an automobile warned them, and their driver stopped to let a big green touring car whiz by. It was David Holman's car, and Zaidee saw in it Holman and the man he had bowed to in the park, Austin Pemberton. Behind them were two women. One of them she recognized as Harriet Stowers; the other she did not know. Holman had turned in his seat with his back to the carriage. He was laughing with Miss Stowers and was in great good humor.

CHAPTER IX

AT DEEP GLEN

David Holman rode gaily with his three companions to the gathering at the Deep Glen club house. He laughed and chatted, drinking in the light humor of the little company with the zest of one whose appetite has been long denied. He felt the uplift of a mild excitement. His ride to Deep Glen animated him with something of the mystery and wonder that a first journey to a distant city holds for an imaginative boy. Holman was more than once reminded of the sense of unreality that had possessed him when he saw, for the first time, the picturesque green slopes of the Normandy of his early dreams arise, like a mirage, out of the sea. Deep Glen was, after all, an undiscovered country to him in spite of the fact that he had written, or caused to be written, so much condemnatory of its people—there was the fly in the ointment! He was regretful now, and not a little ashamed, that he had permitted Fernald to be so abusive. Even at the expense of some of his popularity with the masses he would willingly have withdrawn that part of his campaign against the Insolent Rich, as Fernald termed them. He even doubted if what he had read and what Fernald had written of these people he was about to meet was accurate and he wondered if these other writers, also, had judged merely on hearsay testimony. The same doubt had occurred to him before; he had smiled at it then as unimportant; he wished now he had considered it more seriously.

Holman, at heart, was ill at ease, although neither Miss Stowers nor her paternal aunt, Mrs. Kirkland, who

accompanied them, suspected it. He had fought his way through the world to a high place, shouldering aside those who stood in his path. That had been the only method of progression he knew and he saw it put into force daily by others who were winning their way toward success in every line of human endeavor. But now he became aware that the rough-and-ready fighting to which he was accustomed would be unavailing and that, if he succeeded in gaining a place here, it must be by other and gentler methods. Even on his way to Deep Glen, David Holman was changing previously formed ideas and adjusting standards that had been in process of transformation ever since he had met Harriet Stowers. His new measurements were much more complimentary to the capabilities of those he had been so willing to condemn. Surely, if the three persons in the automobile with him were representatives, Mrs. Van Alstyne and her associates had been misjudged. His acquaintance among women had not been wide. He could count on the fingers of one hand all he had ever known well, and none of these was like Harriet Stowers. He had never met a woman so conversant with current affairs and in a young woman who affected no blue-stocking pedantry, this knowledge was, to him, truly remarkable. Mrs. Kirkland was no less animated and her wit added to the lively enjoyment of the party as they rolled leisurely along, but her laughter lacked the freshness of Miss Stowers', and Holman detected in the aunt a sardonic humor absent from the niece. Holman, during the ride, came in for his share of good natured raillery. A stolid laborer in the path of the automobile refused to step aside. His insolence aroused the indignation of Mrs. Kirkland.

"It takes something as powerful as a motor to teach such people good manners," she exclaimed, as the car turned out to avoid the man, missing him narrowly.

"Have a care," warned young Pemberton. "Let no

harm befall him. He is one of Mr. Holman's beloved Common People."

"Beloved and respected," Holman corrected, smiling.

"Beloved, I can understand, remembering the commandment," interposed Mrs. Kirkland, "but why respected?"

"Because of his vote," suggested Pemberton.

"Because of his possibilities," answered Holman, before the laughter could follow upon Pemberton's words. When the merriment subsided Miss Stowers asked, more seriously,

"Possibilities?"

"Yes, some day he may be in the automobile and you and I in the way on the road." Holman smiled upon them and Miss Stowers smiled back. Her aunt was critical and Holman was acquitting himself well. Encouraged by her smile, Holman lent his wits more and more to the game; he considered it a game: a pleasant interval of fine fooling, where seriousness lay not too far from the surface, flashing out occasionally as gold fish flash in a pool, imparting brilliance to the water. He remembered the little hameau at Versailles where Marie Antoinette and the sixteenth Louis and their court played at dairy-farming and he wondered if this were not, after a fashion, fooling like to that.

Mrs. Kirkland was interested in Holman. She had heard his name discussed frequently and once or twice men had referred to him darkly as a possible president. They had been inclined to scoff at his sincerity and to doubt his ability but she quickly came to the conclusion that here was a man who could hold his own against the men who sought to belittle him. When the automobile stopped to permit of a repair to a tire, and all, glad of the slight relief, descended from the car, she determined to question Mr. Holman more seriously, leading him to give expression to the views that had furnished her friends cause for criticism.

"Do you consider the presidency of the United States truly a lofty place," she asked, "or do you share the views of those who regard the office as a sort of Punch and Judy show, where the manikin in the chair dances on wires in the hands of politicians?" They had been jesting gaily and she wondered if he would dare to touch upon the subject with ridicule. As his gray eyes looked into her mind she fancied that he saw the trap.

"I consider it the most exalted station in the world," he answered seriously.

"And yet," she said, "you consider the president merely the servant of the people?"

"Of course, how could he be otherwise? He is in the pay of the people."

"Alas, Mr. Holman," Mrs. Kirkland sighed, "I fear that theory would make us a nation of servants."

"Or a nation of kings," he supplemented. He turned toward her with one of those abrupt gestures with which he was wont to punctuate his more earnest speech. "There is no difference, in the philosophy of government, between a nation of servants and a nation of kings," he added. "The unhappiness lies in having both servants and kings." He caught Miss Stowers' approving glance.

"We might all be cooks who are both servants and kings or queens," suggested Pemberton, but his attempt to divert the conversation was unsuccessful.

"Would you have us all servants or all kings?" Mrs. Kirkland persisted.

"As long as we are all one or the other it would make no difference to our happiness."

"You really seek to have every one equal?"

"It is not what I seek or what you seek," answered Holman, in his smile a truce. "We are equal, not because we wish to be equal, but in spite of our ambition not to be so."

Young Pemberton came to the rescue. He did not wish the conversation to continue on dangerous ground. From the running board of the automobile he delivered a political speech and, beginning with "Fellow Citizens" harangued the sympathetic mob of three before him, addressing the laboring and unheeding chauffeur as an unconverted sceptic, deaf to all logic. When the tire was repaired and all were again in the car, every trace of seriousness had vanished.

Miss Stowers had insisted that Pemberton ride with her aunt for the rest of the journey and this change placed her at Holman's side. Stirred by conflicting thoughts he watched her face animated by friendly laughter. He saw her smiling eyes rest on the distant landscape as if appreciation of its beauty were a part of her nature. He had never seen a face so aristocratic in its poise and modelling and yet so sympathetically human. With a shudder he recalled the pictures he had seen of her in his own newspapers. He had even considered them attractive but how coarse they were in comparison with her delicate beauty! He wondered, uneasily, if she had seen them. Previous conversation had convinced him that she was familiar with his newspapers and he mentally issued an order that no more of her pictures should be published in the *Epoch*. It suddenly seemed abhorrent to hold up this lily of a girl to the vulgar delight of the mob. With her eyes bathing in the sunshine on the retreating hills, her hair golden under the gauze of her veil, she appeared to him as some fair innocent he had marked for sacrifice.

As he watched her silently she turned toward him, saying with an appositeness that startled him: "If your papers, Mr. Holman, could only teach the poor the beauties of the country; if you could only persuade them to leave the smoky, gray cities and live in the sunshine I think that much you wish to do for them would be easy of accomplishment." She stretched out her slender,

gloved hand toward the whirling landscape. "Look," she said,

*"The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;*

* * * *

*God's in His heaven—
All's right with the world!"*

"Ahoy, there, quoting poetry, Miss Harriet?" piped young Pemberton. "In the spring tra, la, la," he trilled.

Holman was grateful for the laughter that saved him from the necessity of a response, for the unexpected reference to his newspapers had filled him with misgiving. His well-concealed inquietude might have deepened to discomfort had he known that Miss Stowers had seen her name and her unflattering portraits in the *Epoch* more than once. But she had felt no such contempt as ate at Holman's heart at that moment. She smiled tolerantly at the diatribes against her own social circle just as she smiled tolerantly at her own pictures and those of her aunts and uncles. Her toleration was shared in a measure by Mrs. Kirkland, but her maternal aunt, Mrs. Van Alstyne, whose beauty had long since faded and whose divorce and remarriage had made her sensitive to publicity, denounced unreservedly the *Epoch* whenever any one was hardy enough to mention that newspaper in her presence.

Miss Stowers' opinion had been formed independently of her family or friends. She knew from her own knowledge, no less than from the inadvertent testimony of the men she was acquainted with, that many of the abuses Holman's papers excoriated, existed. They had been so much a part of her life that she had been unaware of their injustice until the editorials in Holman's papers had revealed it to her. She had protested to some of her men friends against the wrong only to be met by frank admissions that the injustices and the errors were

recognized but were made necessary by the civilization in which she and they lived and must be practised in self-defence. In a different way her ear, attuned by sympathy heard, as Mendell had heard, the Voice of the People. It came to her as the plaintive cry of hungry souls.

Repeated references in the *Epoch's* editorials to the French revolution brought the danger strangely home to the girl. Only once in her life had she been frightened; that was in Paris. From the safe seclusion of a hotel window she had seen a mob of leaderless, infuriated men charge down the rue de Rivoli shouting death to the police. The red-caps, the *sans-culottes* of 1789, lived again in her imagination and, as the men surging past the Tuileries gardens, surrounded the gilt statue of Jeanne d'Arc beneath her window, she turned from their angry faces and fled in terror from the room. Often, when she read the editorials in Holman's papers the remembrance of that fear came to her sharply.

Miss Stowers' independence was a source of amusement to Mrs. Kirkland, but to Mrs. Van Alstyne it partook of the nature of treason.

"I declare, Harriet," she would say, "you are little better than a socialist. Your father should correct your views. I don't know what your poor mother would have said to hear you advancing such ideas."

With Holman by her side, Harriet Stowers was experiencing the delights of a pleasant adventure. She had eagerly accepted Austin Pemberton's invitation to accompany them to Deep Glen. It was her persuasion that had gained her aunt's chaperonage and she was happy and contented that David Holman on this occasion as on the occasions of their two previous meetings had in no way fallen short of her expectations. In appearance he more than fulfilled previously formed ideas of him. The man's heroic cast appealed to the sentimentalist in her. She was fascinated by the cool fearlessness of his

gaze; she admired his strong, rugged profile; she was charmed by his frank smile. Above all, she approved his unpretentious simplicity; his sureness of himself even in strange surroundings. She had been prepared, notwithstanding Mr. Pemberton's assurances, for some one who flaunted his pronounced views as he might flaunt evidences of his vast wealth. She had found him firm but not aggressive, serious, quiet, at times, almost to the point of austerity, and without an outward show of egotism. She was pleased that she was to have a part in his introduction to Deep Glen. There was no doubt in her mind of the impression he would make. The men might demur, but there would be an agreeable surprise, amounting to a sensation, among the women. As she thought of this she contrasted, favorably to Holman, his splendid physique with the appearance of the men she knew she would see at Deep Glen, watching, from sheltered porches, the last hole play in the golf tournament.

Mrs. Van Alstyne had not arrived at the club-house when the party alighted from Holman's automobile. The tournament was already in progress and men and women, clustered on the broad verandahs, were discussing with animation, their favorites. When Miss Stowers reappeared, after removing her wraps, she and Holman joined the gallery that followed two of the players, Mrs. Kirkland declaring the walk round the links too much of an effort for her and requesting Mr. Pemberton to keep her company at the club-house.

The sun had come out warmly and the day was as balmy as early June. Cumulous clouds, their white sails fully spread, hung becalmed in the blue sky. The distant lake that wound among the hills sparkled in the sunshine and here and there were houses and, afar off, the church spire marking the village. The white sand of the bunkers and the close cropped new grass of the greens caught Holman's eyes from the crests of gentle slopes, as he and Harriet Stowers followed the players, watching them

putting or driving from the tees. The exercise made Miss Stowers radiant. The color rose in her cheeks, her soft hair waved about her temples and the worn look Holman had observed once or twice creeping guiltily into her eyes, gave way to an undimmed sparkle of youth and enjoyment.

Their talk was at first of golf, but the discussion of merits of strokes soon ran only as an under-current, or, rather, as an upper-current, such as her laughter had been during the ride. Sometimes, even while her enthusiasm over a long, straight drive was finding its echo in his praise, she would direct toward him a searching question that involved vitally his own public attitude. He tried to put her off.

"Can you be serious," he asked, "under such a smiling sun? These are the days we were meant to find 'sermons in stones' and not from the mouths of fellow-mortals, however wise."

Holman smiled upon her, but Miss Stowers was not to be diverted and, after a while, the subject of golf was abandoned altogether, and they walked, as if alone, the players and the gallery forgotten, over the beautiful hills of Deep Glen and talked of the needs of humanity. It was the first time they had been alone. Her earnestness amazed him and he was thrilled by her sympathetic deference toward him as he used to be thrilled by the sight of gold in the pan. Holman explained to her his theories and purposes as simply as if she had been a child, robing them in attractive language and taking care that nothing harsh should obtrude to frighten her. He modified and mollified the sterner expressions of Fernald.

"Only by extremes can reforms be accomplished," he told her in extenuation. "Every reformer the world has known has been an extremist. The greatest reformer of all, the One who sought to reform the entire world, was so advanced that eighteen centuries of endeavor have not enabled men to approximate to His ideals."

As they approached the club-house the girl thanked him warmly.

"If I could express to you, Miss Stowers," he said in reply, "the pleasure you have given me by listening to my theories—really, they are only theories and not very new—I am sure you would feel repaid for the interest you have shown. We have been very serious but, truly, I am not sorry, even at the risk of appearing pedantic, for I am glad to have you know my views as they are and not as they are reported by some who, I suspect, do not love me over-much. I am not such a red-handed anarchist, after all, am I?" And he smiled at her his embracing smile; the smile of a boy.

Holman was flushed with victory. He knew that he had gained the valuable friendship of Miss Stowers that should lead to something higher, and the respect, at least, of Mrs. Kirkland, and he saw himself conquering his way into those halls that had, heretofore, been barred to him. He would win success here as he had won it elsewhere; as, in the end he would win it, in such fashion as to command the attention of the world.

It was just before the luncheon hour when Holman and Miss Stowers returned to the club-house. The verandahs were thronged with those who had been watching the golfers from a distance or with those newly arrived from New York. Holman recognized several well known men, not as yet acquaintances but who, he hoped, would be soon. There were many large and small groups of visitors, some standing as they exchanged greetings, others seated round tables. One of the largest and most animated groups had Mrs. Van Alstyne as a center. Holman recognized her instantly and was pleased to see young Austin Pemberton at her side. All were laughing and talking, flattering the gaudily dressed women by their devoted attention. Miss Stowers had excused herself for a moment and Holman was waiting for her when he caught Mr. Pemberton's

eye. The young man smiled a welcome and Holman advanced toward the group alone. The laughter died away as he approached and Pemberton rose. Holman stopped a few feet away from the circle.

"Delighted, Mr. Holman, to see your judgment has led you to follow the winners," greeted Pemberton, his strident voice sounding sharp and clear. He turned to the woman at his side. "Mrs. Van Alstyne," he said, his tone still pitched high, "I wish to have the honor of presenting to you Mr. David Holman."

Holman advanced a step, his head bowed in cordial greeting, when he was halted by the repellent attitude of Mrs. Van Alstyne. She had raised her lorgnette and was staring at him insolently.

"Mr. Pemberton," she said slowly, speaking each word distinctly and so loudly that others paused to listen, "I must decline the honor. You may tell Mr. Holman for me that I do not like his nasty papers."

Holman stood rigidly. The insult cut him clean and deep, but outwardly he showed no sign of his hurt. Pemberton, who had advanced toward Holman, stopped abruptly at the unexpected development and now stood, awkward and uncertain, deserted for once by his quick wit. Holman returned unflinchingly Mrs. Van Alstyne's supercilious gaze.

"Mr. Pemberton," he said slowly, still regarding her with eyes sharp as the point of a dagger, "Please ask Mrs. Van Alstyne for me if she would have liked my papers better, had they ignored her divorce?"

He took his eyes from the woman's face and stared a cool challenge to each of the men round her, but no one moved. Then he turned and made his way to the steps of the verandah, his head erect, his eyes ignoring the glances that marked his progress.

Miss Stowers had returned in time to hear her aunt's insult and Holman's retort. She saw him standing there alone, an outcast, spurned by all the fawning men, in-

sulted but unable to answer with a blow; a Samson shorn and blind, led out for ridicule, and a great wave of pity swept over her. As he walked away she followed him, calling his name as he descended the steps. Holman turned and, to the undisguised astonishment of those who had witnessed her aunt's behavior, Miss Stowers held out her hand.

"Good-bye, Mr. Holman," she said. "It was abominable and I am glad you answered as you did. She deserved it." There was a return to her morning humor. "My aunt will be furious," she laughed.

He took her outstretched hand. His voice was low as he answered her and his softened glance expressed a sincere contrition. "It was cowardly of me," he said. "I regret it. I struck back before I thought. I fear, Miss Stowers, I am still a good deal of a savage and should, perhaps, be back with my Mexican miners. I am contemptible in my own eyes; what must I be in yours! Good-bye." And he strode down the steps.

When Holman had disappeared from sight Sterling Abernathy, one of the men who had been clustered about Mrs. Van Alstyne, took young Mr. Pemberton aside.

"Pemberton," he delivered himself solemnly, "You shouldn't have brought that man here; not because of his papers—no one cares for them—but because of his notorious connection with that Spanish woman, that girl he flaunts everywhere in public. It's disgraceful."

Now Abernathy had been divorced by two women and two other women had been divorced because of him. Pemberton looked at him closely to see if somewhere, hidden under the pudgy face or back of the circled eyes, there was not a spark of saving humor, but the roué's countenance was as impassive as chalk.

"Do you know, I hadn't thought of that," Pemberton confessed drily. "Thank Heaven, though, he has gone and we are saved, Abernathy. We, at least, are still virtuous!"

CHAPTER X

REWARDS FOR SERVICE

In a savage humor David Holman returned to New York. Now that the gates were barred to what he called, in his bitterness, his Fool's Paradise, he realized how much his heart had been set on breaking down the barriers. He considered that he had been beaten unfairly; not that he had been, himself, in the habit of observing the nicer rules of the game any too strictly, but Mrs. Van Alstyne's attack on him had been so unexpected that it partook of the nature of treachery. It was as if he had been invited to her home and the footman had slammed the door in his face.

Only one bright ray remained of the day's early sunshine; that was the volunteered sympathy of Harriet Stowers. But even this deepened his chagrin, for he reflected that, although she had openly offended her aunt in his cause, the relationship must cut him off from further acquaintance with her. Her independence, he argued, had led her to his side when he stood alone, but he would be unwarranted now in pressing his friendship on her. He doubted for the moment, whether they would ever meet again and the thought depressed him even more than Mrs. Van Alstyne's rebuff. Opposition always spurred him on to hopes of greater conquests and he allowed himself to picture how easily, with the friendship of Harriet Stowers and Mrs. Kirkland, or with Harriet Stowers alone as an ally, he could ride under hoof the venomous animosity of Mrs. Van Alstyne and her small self-sufficient coterie.

On the New York side of the ferry he heard newsboys

calling the early editions of the papers and, more from habit, perhaps, than from a real interest (for his mind was still busy with Deep Glen) he bought a copy of the *Epoch*, its self-given name of "Night Edition" contrasting fantastically with the brightness of the early afternoon. He turned its pages mechanically. On the fifth page, facing him, large and bold, was the picture of Miss Harriet Stowers. It was the old picture, the one he had mentally expunged in the morning, as unlike the original, to his newly opened eyes, as vulgarity is unlike refinement. The thing shocked and angered him. It was as if the one jewel that had remained near his grasp had been removed, pushed away by some unintentioned act of his own. He tried to persuade himself that she might not see it, but the effort failed miserably; their talk had made it only too probable that she would at least read the *Epoch's* account of the gathering at Deep Glen. With rising anger and dismay he read what purported to be a report of the golf tournament. He knew it had been written, composed into type and put on the presses before even the earliest enthusiasts had arrived at Deep Glen. At another time he would have praised such prevision as laudable enterprise. There was, naturally, in the text little that concerned the actual match. The article was a familiar discussion of the place the tournament at Deep Glen, the first of the spring, occupied in society's amusements. To Holman, still wincing under the sting of Mrs. Van Alstyne's lash, the intended "smartness" seemed flippant and mortifying, but the parts that ate deepest into his chagrin were the patronizing praise the unfortunate writer had devoted to the woman who had humiliated him, and the even worse commendation of Miss Harriet Stowers.

"Of course, Mrs. Van Alstyne was there," the account ran. "Without her the day would have been robbed of its success. As gracious as ever, she has rarely looked more charming. She was always the center of a brilliant

group entertaining the fortunate ones near her with that bright repartee and sparking wit for which she is famous. Never were the qualities which have made her society's undisputed leader more in evidence.

"Mrs. Van Alstyne's niece, Miss Harriet Stowers, was often in the group surrounding her distinguished aunt, sharing the attention of the men. Miss Stowers is a dashing girl, athletic and a true sportswoman. She is known to her girl friends as 'Harry,' but the men who have ridden with her to hounds or have tried conclusions with her at tennis generally refer to her as 'Hebe.' Miss Stowers last year won the tennis championship in ladies' singles at Newport. She is a great favorite among the women as well as among the men."

A month before such an account would not have seemed preposterous to Holman. He would have smiled as he read it, even as the man who wrote it smiled, knowing its effect upon those whose hunger for society's ambrosia was fed only by such crumbs as fell from the *Epoch's* table. But now, as he pictured the sneer that must come to Harriet Stowers' lips when she saw the fulsome article, his damaged self-esteem excluded any thought of humor. He went quickly to the nearest telephone and, with no waste of words, ordered the offending picture and article suppressed in subsequent editions. Then, only slightly relieved, he went to the *Epoch* office, still nursing his hurt pride. Xavier saw the cloud above Holman's eyes, but even his indulged imagination did not measure the fury of the storm about to break.

"Tell Mr. Ellison I wish to see him at once," Holman said to the boy without the usual recognition. Xavier caromed against walls, chairs and tables in his effort to carry the message with despatch. The city editor, amused at his haste, pulled his ear in friendly fashion and slipped quietly into his Chief's presence.

"Mr. Ellison," Holman began, his voice as hard as a diamond, "what could have induced you to print that

barbarous picture of Miss Stowers and that puerile story of the golf match at Deep Glen?"

The city editor was taken by surprise. He had published similar things scores of times before and there had been only favorable comment. He stammered something to this effect in explanation:

"You are forever making blunders, Mr. Ellison." Holman flayed him impassionately, his voice as steady as a surgeon's hand. "I told you, particularly, to say nothing that could offend and to use no pictures."

"I beg your pardon, sir," Ellison answered. "I understood you to say not to use Mrs. Van Alstyne's picture and that I might use any others I chose. I instructed the man who wrote the story to say only pleasant things and to be careful not to give offence. I think he tried his best to carry out those instructions, sir."

Holman's gaze, as undeviating as an arrow, carried a poisoned shaft of scorn and incredulity. "It was stupid, insufferable," was his final verdict. "I cannot tolerate such bad judgment. I intend to dispense with your services, Mr. Ellison, and I shall suspend indefinitely the reporter who wrote the idiotic story. Who is he?"

Ellison caught his breath sharply and his shoulders, bent by years of toil, seemed suddenly about to collapse, but, even in his peril, the city editor was loyal to his men.

"It was not in any way his fault," his low voice answered. "He did only what I told him to do. If there is any blame it should be mine; I am responsible for the feature. I am sorry it did not please you. I tried to have it according to your wishes. The reporter was not to blame. He carried out my instructions and I read the story over after he had written it. I thought it was about what you wanted."

Holman's impatient gesture put aside contemptuously the extenuation. He was gaining but small satisfaction from the quiet city editor. Everything appeared to thwart him today and he rose from his chair as if,

standing, he could the better crush all that had opposed him. Purbled by injured pride, which makes the clearest-eyed of men myopic, he saw dimly the form of the city editor as one that stood in his path. That he should shield the writer, withholding his name, was unpardonable.

"Very well, sir," Holman said implacably, "if you will not answer my questions, you must leave my office at once. You are no longer connected with the *Epoch*. You can get your hat and go now. I shall put another man in your place immediately."

Again there was a sharp catch in Ellison's voice and his lips trembled as if he wished to speak, but no words came from them. Then he bowed his head in assent to the superior will and went slowly out of the room. He passed through Holman's outer office and into the long city-room where the afternoon sun was shining on desks littered with papers. A few reporters, Riefsnider among them, were writing busily or waiting for assignments. The city editor did not look at them. He was their friend; there was not one among them he did not like or who did not like him, but he had never been demonstrative, his shy nature fleeing from outward show, and now, even had he wished, it would have been impossible for him to confess to them the misfortune which humiliated him. He kept his gaze bent upon his desk. So often had he sat there that between him and it there seemed to exist an intimate companionship. He and this great city-room where he had been a kindly master, had much in common. Now he was no longer a part of it nor it of him. He stood there, in that familiar place, an alien. A sense of loneliness, of loss, oppressed him and gripped his throat.

His wondering assistant saw Ellison remove his office coat slowly. He observed the grayness of the little man's face and conjectured that overwork was, at last, claiming its certain toll. He came to Ellison's side and

tenderly aided the city editor with his street coat.

"What's the matter, old man; ill?" he asked.

"Yes," muttered the city editor, "I'm going—home. Good-bye."

He took the other's hand. They had been good and true friends. But still he could not confess his shame. "I've been discharged," was on his mind and in his heart, but he turned away, the words unuttered. He walked alone to the door, his thin shoulders stooping more than ever, and slipped quietly out into the hall and into the street.

Holman's life-long habit was to form decisions quickly, act without hesitation and abide by the result. He rarely allowed himself to revert to the wisdom or justice of an action once taken, dismissing the thing done as irrevocably done. It is a policy that has won the world's battles or lost them at frightful cost. Holman communicated his dismissal of Ellison and his reasons therefor, to his managing editor, a white-faced, busy little man with a colorless soul, a time-server who carried out orders unquestioningly. He rapidly made out a list of the men who might take Ellison's place. The list was not long. Ellison's assistant was too inexperienced for the position. Objections to the other desk-men made it necessary to promote some reporter and the managing editor suggested Riefsnider, to which Holman assented, though not with entire approval.

"Perhaps it will be good training for him," he agreed. "It will teach him there are some things he doesn't know."

So it was that Riefsnider was made city editor in Arthur Ellison's stead, assuming his new duties immediately, almost before the ink was dry on the pen lying on Ellison's old desk.

These details arranged, Holman sent for Fernald. The editorial writer, accorded too few conferences with

his Chief of late, came eagerly, his inevitable book held open in his hand.

"Good, Fernald," Holman cried as the loose, powerful figure entered the door. "I was worrying, lest you might have gone out, tempted by the weather to do some riding." It was practically the only form of exercise Fernald engaged in. "I have been to Deep Glen. I have bearded the social lion in his den, or her den, for I think, if it has a sex, it is feminine. I came away disgusted, glad to exchange, even for the hot air of this musty office, the perfume of the painted women at Deep Glen clubhouse; preferring these pictures—" he waved his hand toward the walls—"to those chromos."

Fernald's face brightened. It was like the Holman of old talking; he had seemed a trifle changed latterly.

"You were quite right, Fernald. They are the froth of a polluted pool. I have seen them at close range. I was wrong to think they might be otherwise. Attack them as you will, my dear Fernald; I give you a free hand. Scourge them to your heart's content and may the Lord have mercy on their souls!"

Fernald joined in his humor. It was the first time he had ever heard Holman confess himself at fault. "I, too, have been thinking it over," he said, "and, do you know, I had about taken your view. They are annoying it is true, but, after all, harmless. They are mosquitoes that bite, but they are not the ones that carry poison."

Holman laughed aloud unpleasantly. "Yes they are mosquitoes; they are not even butterflies," he assented. "Well, since they are mosquitoes swat them occasionally. Use a paddle if you consider them unworthy a musket. Don't grow weary of well doing. I want you to keep the animals stirred up. Deal in whatever personalities you will. I shall withdraw my taboo regarding Mrs. Van Alstyne. I know her. She is as bad as the rest; she must suffer with them. Really, I believe she is worse

than the rest, so, if you wish to use her as a type, you have my permission."

"These people are deafened by their own silly noise," the editorial writer responded, roused to louder music now that the familiar string lay beneath his hand. "They hear only their own foolish words."

Fernald enlarged upon the favorite theme and Holman listened, soothed by the prospect of revenge, for revenge is the only balm that can take the fever and soreness from wounded pride.

When Fernald at last left him, Holman was again in high spirits, confident, hopeful and aggressive. He opened two telegrams from Mendell, already entering upon his work. The messages were optimistic and cheering. Holman took from a locked drawer a list of those delegates already chosen to the coming national convention. Opposite many of the names were crosses and occasionally remarks in Holman's hand-writing. Some of the names had after them: "Sure," others: "Perhaps;" still other names had opposite them question marks and in a few places Holman had written: "Good man to see." Holman was engaged in this congenial work when Fernald reentered the room. He no longer moved slowly. The slouchiness was gone from his walk and he came to the desk briskly.

"I have just heard," he said, "that you have discharged Ellison. As you are aware, I know precious little about the city-room and I have no wish to interfere with your plans or management, but I have known Ellison so long and he has always seemed to me so faithful and devoted that I wish to ask if there is not some ground upon which you can reconsider your determination."

No one ever crossed Holman in his dealing with the men employed by him. Injustices were passed over; the frequent sudden dismissals were ignored. Holman frowned slightly now to find his action questioned, even

in so little, but he answered Fernald without any show of irritation.

"Mr. Ellison made an atrocious blunder. It was not the first time. I cannot have a man who shows such poor judgment on the paper."

"Too bad, too bad," sighed Fernald. "I am very sorry. I didn't know him very well, but his seriousness and his quietness among all that bustle and confusion in the city-room impressed me and made me like him. I hear he has a wife and five or six little children. Perhaps you could use him in some other place."

"No, Mr. Fernald, my decision has been made. I cannot change it, even to oblige you. If Mr. Ellison was discharged it was his own fault. He must serve as an example to the others."

He made a gesture of finality and Fernald, murmuring, "Too bad, too bad," withdrew and left his employer at his lists. But the mild protest of the editorial writer had cast Holman back into the unpleasant mood that had marked his arrival at the office and the names of delegates failed now to arouse his enthusiasm. He re-read Mendell's telegrams, but they, also, would not serve. Evidently the day was one in which circumstances conspired against him. He returned the lists to the drawer locking it with a frown, and, without so much as a nod to Xavier, left the building and entered his waiting automobile.

"Madison avenue," he directed the chauffeur. "But, first, take a run for half an hour through the park."

The genial atmosphere of the dying afternoon could not warm Holman to a sense of contentment, and when he arrived at the Madison avenue house his thoughts were still sombre. He was greatly surprised to find Zaidee in bed and listened with attention while she told of the accident. In her recital she withheld altogether any reference to Mr. O'Malley, asserting that a park policeman had given her what small assistance was necessary. She had fretted all day over her unexpected vision of

Holman in the automobile with Miss Stowers and Mr. Pemberton. It had caused her more anguish than the hurt to her foot and, now that Holman was before her, she was in no mood to give him details of her adventure. She narrated the episode meagerly.

"You shouldn't ride Gila," was his comment. "I have warned you before about that brute. She's not safe."

"You gave her to me."

"The logic of it!" he retorted ironically, under his breath.

Her answer was almost a challenge to a quarrel. During her day of enforced quiet she had rehearsed many times what she would say to Holman. She had intended to upbraid him for his deceit. She had wished it were possible to sting him into an admission. Now, however, that he was by her side and had made no mention of his companions of the morning, she decided to say nothing about having seen him. Her recollection of the man she had met so strangely that morning strengthened her resolution to be reticent. She compared O'Malley's consideration and kindness with the rough, cold inquiries of Holman who, instead of expressing solicitude, seemed ready to find fault with her for having been injured.

Holman, too, was mentally occupied in making comparisons. Zaidee in her suffering, for her foot now throbbed painfully, had not given to her personal adornment that care which so greatly enhanced her charm. Her hair, loosely braided, was thrown over her shoulder and fell, in uncared-for masses, about her face, an ominous background. She was without color and her expression was one of querulous petulance. Holman contrasted her as she lay there dark, forbidding, feral, with Harriet Stowers, fair and exquisite. The room, too, was in disarray, the maid having interrupted her massage of Zaidee's strained arms and hands when Holman was announced, leaving the towels, water and liniments in evidence. Holman disliked disorderliness. Presently he

rose and inquired for Captain. The boy was having his dinner downstairs.

"Why don't you let him dine up here in your room, where, at any rate, he will not be alone?" Holman snapped out the question as he left the room and made his way downstairs without waiting for a reply.

Captain welcomed him eagerly. The boy was still in a fever of excitement over the accident to his mother. He gave his child's version of the affair.

"They carried her up into the house from the carriage in their arms; Martin and Mary," he explained, naming two of the house servants. "And there was a beautiful man with beautiful red hair who put his arm about Mamacita and almost lifted her by himself he was so strong. He was almost as beautiful, Amigo, as you."

Holman laughed. He pictured the "beautiful man" of Captain's imagining, as a red-haired policeman, brave in brass buttons. He remained until the child had eaten, accompanying the boy and his nurse upstairs. Captain was brought into the sick-room. The bottles and bandages on the night-table by the bed filled him with wonder. As he approached his mother to give her his goodnight kiss, his curiosity was still occupied with the array of bottles and, stumbling on a rug, he fell on Zaidee's bruised foot. The sudden pain wrung from her a sharp cry and a rough imprecation in the miner's Spanish of her childhood. The boy, unaware that he had caused his mother pain drew back in fright and instinctively turned to Holman.

"He didn't mean it. Couldn't you see it was unintentional?" Holman demanded angrily. "Why do you have to be so vulgar?"

Zaidee, still suffering acutely, stifled the reply that came readily. Holman took the boy's hand and led him, still wondering and afraid, to the nursery. He remained there until the child was asleep. When he returned he announced his intention of dining down-town.

"You are very busy these days." Zaidee's voice was flat, the vibration gone out of it.

"Yes."

"Have you seen your friend, Mr. Pemberton, lately?"

He shot a shrewd glance at her. The dark eyes did not betray her.

"No," he answered roughly. "I told you so only last night. Why are you always asking such absurd questions?"

She vouchsafed no reply, turning her face from him as he left the room, calling a "Goodnight" after him.

Hours after Holman had left the house Zaidee remained awake, reviewing the happenings of that eventful day. The runaway, the rescue, Holman's perfidy and their quarrel passed and repassed before her survey when suddenly the recollection of her harsh word to Captain caused her eyes to fill with tears. She called the nurse to her and rose. Slowly, her every movement sending sharp stabs from foot to head, she hobbled painfully to the nursery, biting her lips to keep back expressions of her suffering and, bending over the little bed, her eyes still wet with weeping, she gave Captain his deferred goodnight kiss.

CHAPTER XI

A TIRED LITTLE MAN SLIPS OUT OF LIFE AND IS SOON FORGOTTEN

Ellison was dead. The information was conveyed to the *Epoch* office by his widow. Waking at the usual hour in the morning, she had spoken to him and, when no response came, she had touched gently his cold face. Instantly she had realized, so unmistakable is the chill of death, that her husband's voice would never greet her again. He had slipped out of life so quietly that even the woman by his side had been undisturbed, and he must have been lying there lifeless for hours when, at last, she had touched that death-cold cheek and had cried out in alarm, her frightened appeals to him serving only to waken the terrified children, who had gazed in awe at their father lying on the bed, silent amid the surrounding confusion. Mrs. Ellison was a patient, hard-working, thin woman, whose drab life had never before been colored by a tragedy. She lived within her home, finding there the full satisfaction of her limited wants, even as her husband had lived in his office. The care of many children had deprived her of the opportunity of making acquaintances, so that now, when her tragedy had come and stood gaunt before her, she knew not where to flee for help. She, who all her life had been meekly, unquestioningly dependent, was suddenly raised to the dignity of dependence, where she must act, not only for herself but for others.

In all the years her husband had been employed by David Holman, Mrs. Ellison had never been inside the *Epoch* office. She hurried there now, unconscious that she no longer had the right to go. With eyes that seemed too wide for weeping, she told her story to her husband's former assistant. Mr. Ellison, she said, had come home

the previous afternoon much earlier than usual, and had appeared to be greatly depressed. To her questions he had replied only that he was not feeling well. He had eaten no dinner and had retired early. That was all she knew, except—but she could not tell again of that frightful awakening.

The news of Ellison's death was related to Riefsnider as soon as he appeared. The earliest reporters heard of it first. They discussed it in whispers. So closely upon the news of Ellison's dismissal came word of his death that the two events were regarded by many in the office, particularly the younger men, in the relationship of cause and effect. Championship of the little man who could never champion them again ran so high that there was danger of revolt. Riefsnider felt it in the cold, unsympathetic glances of the men. Even his prompt action in sending one of the older reporters, a good friend of the dead city editor, with Mrs. Ellison to do all that he could to aid her, did not calm the indignation of members of the staff who were gathered in little knots, like conspirators planning action.

A young reporter who owed his place to Ellison, precipitated matters by resigning.

"He was the whitest man in the office," the youth announced proudly, "and I intend my resignation as a protest against the brutal ingratitude that killed him."

He wrote a note full of fiery indignation. It was a youthful note, but he was proud of it, and he showed it to several of the older men before he laid it, somewhat grandiosely, on Riefsnider's desk that had so lately been Ellison's. The new city editor, busy with the delayed morning work, failed to see the typewritten resignation and the boy, his bomb having sizzled and failed to explode, went sheepishly to his seat and began gathering together his belongings. He was really so unimportant to the great newspaper, this youthful knight tilting at windmills, that his boyish chivalry furnished for the

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older men the humor that relieved a tense situation. As the cub-reporter was leaving the office, ignored by the busy city editor, and bidding rather histrionic goodbyes to his companions, one of the veterans spoke to him.

"You're all right, my boy," agreed the cynic, "I wish I had your luck, for, you know, if you keep on resigning long enough you may get out of the newspaper business for good."

Holman, arriving at the office soon after noon, heard the news from Fernald.

"That's too bad; I am sorry to hear it," was his only comment. He took upon himself no responsibility for the unfortunate occurrence, nor did he seek to justify his discharge of the city editor. For him that part of it was ended, as certainly as Ellison's life. "You were saying yesterday, Mr. Fernald," he resumed, "something about Mr. Ellison's family, his wife and children. I shall have a man find out their circumstances and shall see to it that they want for nothing. Mr. Ellison was too lately in my employ and had been too long with the *Epoch* to permit whatever faults he may have had to stand in the way of my helping his widow and children. I shall make sure that they are provided for." It was his unfailing balm; his universal panacea—money. There was nothing it could not cure, just as there was nothing it could not obtain. Only Pharisees might deny the efficacy of his sovereign remedy.

When Fernald, weighed down by the sadness of Ellison's death, took what comfort he could from these assurances and departed, Holman occupied himself with new telegrams from Mendell. They were in code form, Translated, they testified to his further success. Holman drafted a reply, consulting laboriously a private code book. The message that he transposed into cipher read:

Use your own judgment about terms. Get as much support as you can. Make all agreements

subject to approval but in no circumstances make use of my name. Telegraph fully and often. Congratulations.

The telegram was unsigned. Although it could have been despatched by operators in the *Epoch* office Holman sent Xavier with it to a branch telegraph station in lower Broadway.

Throughout the day Holman nursed his hurt pride. Ellison's death and Mendell's successes were forgotten in his contemplation of the rebuke administered by Mrs. Van Alstyne. Rage gnawed at his heart unceasingly distracting his attention from all other things. In some way he would be revenged. Nor would he abandon his hopes of Harriet Stowers. Mrs. Van Alstyne should be taught that he was not to be defeated so easily; he was not one she could so lightly dismiss. If it were only to humiliate her he would win the heart of her niece; but there was more than revenge in his purpose; his conquering desire that had never yet failed of fulfilment was to have this girl for his wife and he did not intend to be denied. How he was to conquer there he could not tell, but conquer he would somehow, soon or late. If he had to gain all other honors first to lay them before her as an offering he would wait until such honors were gained but, in the end, she should yield to him. Already she had shown her friendship, but friendship would not satisfy him. He would win her by force or stratagem as he won always. He wondered if something more than friendship had prompted Harriet's sudden, daring disregard of her aunt at Deep Glen. Whatever had been the cause of that public show of sympathy Holman knew he had begun well with her, although the present hedged her round with a conventional barrier that kept him away from her. He would break it down in time. What a weak fool he had been to consider for an instant that he

might not see her again. He would find a way to see her and to win her. If she did not already have toward him a sentiment deeper than sympathy he would gain her love in time, or, if her love was beyond his power or hers to control, he would so lay siege to her heart, her hopes and her ambitions that in the end she would consent to be his wife. He had made marriage with Harriet Stowers a part of his plans; his scheme for revenge and his scheme to obtain power would now seem incomplete without her.

Throughout the morning Holman busied himself with the idea of seeing Miss Stowers again, wondering how it could be brought about in such manner as to conceal his own great desire and to avoid the risk of committing Harriet to her aunt's side by his importunity. While alone at luncheon the problem still perplexed him and he had found no solution when he returned to the office.

Looking over his calendar later, Holman discovered, with a dubious shake of the head, that it was the day Senator Wade Forney had so confidently appointed for a meeting. He discredited the idea that the politician was in condition to keep his engagements even if, which was improbable, he could remember them. He ruminated, trying to imagine where Forney then was and his fancy was picturing the man as hidden somewhere, probably still at Mag Reardon's, insensate, sunk in alcoholic coma, when the door opened and the boy temporarily replacing Xavier appeared.

"Senator Forney," he announced.

Holman betrayed no surprise. He watched the figure of the former Senator, wasted by the hard battle with his old enemy, enter the door.

"True to the day," was his greeting.

"To the hour," Senator Forney answered.

"I was expecting you."

Holman pointed to a chair and Forney sank upon it unsteadily. His face was thinner and whiter, but in his

eyes a clearer light was burning. There was about him, about his dress and about the color of his skin, the immaculateness, the washed-out appearance of a man convalescent after a long illness.

"How have you been?" asked Holman.

"Very well, thank you." It was a perfunctory, pathetic lie, obvious to any observer.

The politician, as if he feared his resolution might leave him, came quickly to the point.

"Holman," he began, "I've been thinking over what you said. Well, here's my answer: You can't have my support unless you get Jerry McQuade's."

Holman looked at him steadily. Was it another Wade Forney that had emerged from Mag Reardon's, the Wade Forney, perhaps, of a decade or more ago, before defeat and whiskey had weakened him? He put the supposition aside when the former Senator's pale eyes fell at his next question.

"Did you break your promise? Did you say anything to McQuade about my arrangement in regard to Heyward's delegates?"

"No, of course not," the politician responded with averted glance. The return to his old domineering self had been as transitory and harmless as heat lightning. "Only," he explained, "McQuade and I have been friends a good many years and I couldn't desert him now."

"Not even to get back to the Senate?"

Forney winced under the sneer. His debilitated spirit, unable to cope with the youth and vigor of Holman, cried out against the taunt as persecution. "Not even to get back to the Senate," he repeated with trembling lips. But he could not hold himself to the mark. "Dave, why don't you see McQuade? He isn't a bad sort, you know," he pleaded.

Holman wondered if any part of the suggestion came from the Boss. "If Mr. McQuade wishes to see me," he said coldly, "he must come to me. I can get along

without Jerry McQuade, but you, Forney, cannot get along without me."

The former Senator believed, though the belief was hateful to him, that this was true. There was no argument left in him. "I'll give you this tip, Dave," he volunteered weakly, "McQuade has been squeezed pretty hard in Wall street lately. I believe he wants money."

Holman looked at him scornfully. His voice rolled melliflently down from the heights. "My dear Senator Forney," he protested, "I believe you are aware that I am not a fool." He unlocked a drawer and took from it the list of delegates. "I have here the name of every man who, up to this time, has been chosen a delegate to the convention which meets on June 28 in this city. There are many pledged to support Heyward; there are others, not an inconsiderable number, who have given me secret assurances of their intention to vote for me if I speak the word. Together these delegates will form a majority of the convention. I haven't the slightest need of McQuade's support nor the remotest interest in his financial situation."

Forney was helpless. He had come, willing to fight, but weak and unprepared; he had no strength left and was ready to crawl before the dominant Holman and beg for favors.

"I'll be with you, Dave," he committed himself half-heartedly. "You can count on me and, when the time comes, I'll do all I can to swing the New York delegation into line for you, but—you might see McQuade first, Dave; it couldn't do any harm."

Holman did not glory in his victory. It had been too easy. The value of Forney's support was small. He was using the politician as the surest and best way of dealing with McQuade, trusting to Forney, with the lure of the senatorship before him, to advance his own arguments to bring the Boss to terms.

Defeated and unable to remain longer in the close

atmosphere of the room, Forney rose and shook hands irresolutely. In his own eyes he was only a pathetic ghost of his former self. He felt more than ever that he was losing his uncertain grip on success. A soft rain, chill and gray, was falling as he started to leave the building. He was without an umbrella and, for a while, stood shivering in the little group of rain-caught persons blocking the entrance. The dampness was penetrating. On the opposite corner the friendly swinging doors of a saloon invited entrance. He watched the laughing, hearty men going in. What a contrast in their warm good-humor to the killing frost of men like Holman and McQuade. And again he shivered. The day cut him unkindly, but it was no more cruel than life had become. With sudden resolution Forney, using his elbow as a ram, forced a way for himself through the human pack that seemed to be holding him back from warmth and companionship. Turning up his coat-collar, he walked weakly across the street and passed through the friendly swinging doors.

Holman was glad to have the rest of the afternoon alone. He went over hurriedly a large assortment of clippings from many newspapers. They contained comments on himself as a presidential possibility. Those favorable to his candidacy far outnumbered those opposed or non-committal. Newspapers in every part of the country were represented. Some of these were openly controlled by Holman, forming part of his powerful syndicate, but many others were newspapers that, through his money or his news service, owed their life to him. No one but himself, not even Mendell, knew how many were to be counted in the latter class. Holman weeded out the unfavorable, denunciatory comments from the others, re-reading those that remained with serious attention. Then he wrote. Page after page he tore up, throwing the small bits into the waste basket. Once during this process Xavier appeared with the in-

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formation that certain men had called. Holman did not raise his eyes from the paper as he said: "I wish to see no one. Tell any one who calls, whoever he may be, that I am engaged and have left orders not to be disturbed."

He busied himself with his writing again, but it was long before it could be fashioned to his entire satisfaction. At last, however, it was done and he summoned Fernald.

"These are extracts from newspapers regarding a subject, Mr. Fernald, on which we have spoken several times of late," Holman said, giving to the editorial writer the favorable comments he had taken the pains to segregate. "I refer to the possibility of my becoming a candidate for the presidency. They are from widely separated districts, showing that the discussion is general. These men and the great body of readers they represent, require an answer. I wish you would see that, tomorrow, prominently displayed,—not on the first page, but on any other page you select—these extracts are reproduced; with credit, of course." He waited while Fernald ran through the clippings, adding, "On the editorial page, in place of the usual editorial, publish this in large, clear type." He handed to the editorial writer the announcement he had so labored to compose. It read:

On another page this morning will be found, reproduced, recent editorial utterances on the subject of my candidacy for the Presidency of the United States. So insistent have become the demands that I define my position and so sincere are the words of praise received from all parts of the country, that I consider it my duty to break the silence I have consistently maintained. I am not a candidate for any office. I have my work to do and I am desirous of continuing the performance of my duty in the sphere I have chosen. The office of

President of the United States is the highest in the gift of the greatest people the world has known. No man has ever refused it. No man will ever be so presumptuous as to refuse it. I do not seek it. But if the people of the United States should consider that my services are helpful to their welfare, neither my own personal desires nor my private interests could deter me from accepting such a trust.

David Holman

With beating heart and eager eye Fernald read the announcement. Old habit, the careful habit of student and philosopher, made him read it through again before he turned upon Holman a gaze luminous with inspiration.

"There is nothing," he cried, "that can keep you from the place. The unprincipled, public-exploiting plutocrats may foam at the mouth and lash themselves into a frothing fury, but they are at the turning of their golden road." He touched the clippings. "This is the Voice of the People. I have told you before that they have been whispering your name as the David who will save them from the Philistines." He pushed his gold-brown hair back from his furrowed forehead and stood erect and martial. "You do not need the Money Power and you do not need the aid of McQuade and his kind. You can walk alone. Behind you there is good company. You can march at the head of the Real People."

Holman was pleased. "The time is coming, perhaps," he said, "when we shall have need of all your fine phrases, Fernald; we shall want the strength of all your arguments. The truth is mighty and must prevail, but so many things are cornered now-a-days that the Trusts may even have acquired the monopoly of truth and——" his smile broadened—, "and limited the output."

Fernald's heart sang within him. In his new joy he forgot the sorrow Ellison's death had caused him. He saw only *that his vision* was about to be realized; victory was fore-

ordained and the man he had idealized was to be crowned by the great people to whom he had devoted his life.

The daylight had gone, the lights had been turned on and night had fallen before Holman was ready to leave his office. He had again occupied himself with writing and, as before, was dissatisfied with many efforts. At last, impatiently, he enclosed his brief note in an envelope and sealed it.

"Xavier," he asked when the boy appeared in answer to his ring, "do you know Mr. McQuade when you see him?"

"Boss McQuade?" Xavier's eyes widened.

"The same."

"I should say! I live in his district."

Holman encouraged him with his smile. "Then here is a letter. I can trust you with it. I want you to see that Mr. McQuade gets it in person. Give it into his hands and, upon no account, whatever you do, give it to any one else; to no servant or secretary or type-writer or politician or woman; you understand?"

Xavier's tow head heliographed an affirmative answer.

"And say nothing about it to any one else, either now or later. Now be off with you. Skat!"

Holman made a dumb show of dusting him out of the room and, in an incredibly short time afterward, Xavier was on his way to Boss McQuade's, the proudest boy in New York.

Holman's note, that he carried, read:

I saw Senator Forney today. He said something about a conference. If you wish to make any arrangement you can reach me between half past eight and ten o'clock tonight by telephone at my home in West Tenth street.

David Holman

In a lower corner he had written the number of the *telephone*.

CHAPTER XII

MR. McQUADE CALLS UPON MR. O'MALLEY AND DELIVERS A WARNING

The District Attorney of New York was gaining the high approval of the people who had elected him to office and the cordial hatred of the organization that, in a moment of unwise enthusiasm, had nominated him. Bosses, little and big, were besieging McQuade with their complaints that Emmet O'Malley in his prosecution of the election fraud cases was going, as they expressed it, beyond all bounds of decency. And McQuade, to whom the organization was of higher importance than the city, all five boroughs together, agreed with them, for he held that O'Malley had not been made district attorney to turn upon those who had given him the place and, moreover, to aggravate his offence, small election frauds for which faithful followers now faced prison had, from time immemorial, been practised without fear of punishment. It was annoying in the extreme to the old leader and he had been to Mr. O'Malley's office to see him about it, but small good had come of it. He had departed unsuccessful for the moment. The matter was pressing but he had bided his time, hoping that the District Attorney would see the folly of his ways. He had as yet used no threats, for threats were a last resort to remedy desperate situations, and the Boss had relied on arguments and promises, but Mr. O'Malley had answered the former and ignored the latter. Now the time had come for action. If O'Malley persisted he would read the District Attorney out of the organization despite the fact that he was National Committeeman and

would go to the convention, expecting and expected to take a prominent part.

McQuade drew his stiff felt hat down about his ears, turned up his overcoat collar although the day was far from cold and thrust his cigar more firmly in his mouth as he made his way to the District Attorney's office. Willingly he would have sent for O'Malley had he not known that such action would be to invite refusal and it did not soften his mood that he was forced to go to the man he had so often befriended.

Unaware, and, it may be, heedless of the wrath of the Boss about to descend upon him, Emmet O'Malley, in his thoughts, was far away from politics and law-breakers. Seated at his desk, a volume of law reports before him open at a case that furnished an important precedent in his prosecution of McQuade's "heelers" guilty of frauds in the fall election, he was occupied in recalling every detail of his meeting with Mrs. Sylvestre in the park the morning before. He had tried to fasten his attention upon the case in point, but his mind, usually so ready to walk along the path he wished it to follow, went straying from prosecutions and precedents to the woman who, painfully injured, had borne her hurt so bravely. Intangible as a shadow there had been about her a dark suggestion of romance and mystery, perhaps of tragedy. Her face with eyes made more brilliant by the the pallor pain had spread over it forced itself between him and the open book. It might have been due to her injury, he reasoned, that her expression as it came back vividly to his memory suggested to him hidden sorrow and suffering. He was skilled by long practice in reading the expression of eyes and mouth and this skill brought to him the conviction that the woman he had so fortuitously been able to aid was unhappy. Who was she? What was she? were questions that formed themselves again and again and found in his conjectures no satisfactory answers.

The inability to hazard a guess as to her station and situation that would still his unquiet curiosity gave added fascination to the problem he had set himself to solve. As tantalizing as a memory so uncertain that one cannot determine whether it springs from reality or a dream, the thought that somewhere before he had seen her possessed him, and he could not be rid of it, sending his thoughts back over many half-forgotten roads in a vain endeavor to meet there this woman who seemed to have come again into his life to exert no small influence on it, for, in spite of his effort to regard it all as merely an episode, O'Malley felt certain that he and Mrs. Sylvestre would meet again. And he found himself looking forward to that meeting. He wished to know who she was and what had been the history that had left its mark upon her dark, youthful face. Nor could he persuade himself that curiosity alone gave the spur to his desire. He tried to analyze his sentiments but they would submit to no test. All that he was sure of was that the young woman he had seen was in some manner being buffeted by the whirling waters of unfriendly circumstance and that a loyal hand might render her opportune service. Her remarks to him, apparently restrained and guarded, seemed to indicate as much. Mr. O'Malley was smiling at the long way his not unpleasant speculation had led him when an attendant entered and announced that Mr. McQuade desired to speak to him.

The District Attorney roused himself from his reverie.

"Tell him to come right in," he directed.

McQuade entered the room unceremoniously, as one exercising an undeniable right and lost no time in explaining the business that had brought him. He returned O'Malley's greeting with a curt "how are you?" and approached the desk, standing before the District Attorney with his hat still pulled about his ears, his coat collar up and the cigar between his teeth.

"Won't you sit down?" Mr. O'Malley asked.

But McQuade ignored the invitation; "O'Malley," he said, drawing his eyebrows together, fastening from under them a stern gaze on the District Attorney, "this thing has gone far enough."

O'Malley was not unfamiliar with McQuade's surlier moods and he knew that the veteran dictator was accustomed to use the words that came to him the most readily, heedless as to how they fell upon his listener's ears. "Hadn't you better sit down," he suggested with unruffled courtesy, "and remove your hat and coat?"

"I'll keep on my hat," McQuade growled between teeth that clenched his cigar. "This is not your personal, private office, O'Malley; this is the office of the District Attorney of this city, elected by the people."

"As you will," assented O'Malley, a smile on his lips but in his blue eyes a dangerous gleam that did not escape McQuade but could not deter him, even in the slightest, from his purpose, for the old Boss was a stranger to fear and had his say whatever threatened.

"You seem to have got the idea that you can run this office as if it belonged to you," McQuade continued, looking straight at O'Malley, "but you were put in here by the organization not to do as you damn please but to act in its interests, and the sooner you learn that your party is responsible for what you do the better it will be, O'Malley, for you."

McQuade paused. He was not given to long speeches.

"Is that all you have to say?" O'Malley asked calmly.

"There has got to be an end of this foolishness of yours," McQuade was not mincing words. "I won't stand for your plays to the gallery."

"Just what 'plays,' Mr. McQuade, will you not 'stand for'?"

"You've got to let up on these boys you are trying to railroad up the river."

"Do you mean these ballot-box thieves, these criminals

who have tried to rob decent citizens of their right of suffrage?"

"You know well enough who I mean. You can call them whatever hard names you like. They helped to put you in this office."

"Now look here, McQuade," O'Malley's tone shifted abruptly from formal politeness to command. "You and I have been political friends a good many years. I have stood by you whenever I could and have always stood by our party. But in Congress I had to do with the making of laws not enforcing them. As I told you when you were here last I was elected to this office not by any set of men to protect their interests or to connive at their crimes; I was elected by the people of this city to enforce the laws and as long as I am here the laws will be enforced. These men are thieves and they are going to be put where thieves belong, in the penitentiary, if I can put them there, and I believe I can."

"They've only done what's been done in every election ever held in this city and you know it. If you're going to be strict about enforcing the laws you'd better go after some of the bigger robbers in Wall street instead of workers in your own party." O'Malley had heard the rumors that McQuade had suffered losses through recent stock speculation, but he put aside the Boss's irrelevant complaint.

"These crimes may have been committed before as you say; you are probably right. But, then, it was not my duty to prosecute the offenders; now it is and all you can say will not prevent me performing that duty. If you wish to serve your party, and aid your organization you can do so better by discouraging such practices instead of coming to me at this time."

The gray old Boss was roused. "You are trying to break up the organization," he thundered, shaking a thick forefinger at the District Attorney as he hurled the accusation at him.

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"I am trying to do nothing of the sort," O'Malley contradicted, his slow words a dam to the wrath rising within him.

"You are," McQuade cast back at him. "You got in here under false pretenses. You are making all of us ridiculous. I was a fool to trust you."

O'Malley rose. His temper was quick and hot but he still held it steady and cool as he said: "McQuade, I want you to know you cannot come here to blackguard me."

But the Boss swept on. "If you don't drop these cases; if you send a single man of my organization to prison, O'Malley, I'll see that you never get into a public office again. I'll defeat you for renomination and, if you go outside and make the run independently, I'll beat you in the election if I have to throw over the whole ticket to do it."

It was O'Malley who was roused now. His indignation that had been held in subjection so well slipped the leash and with two short steps he was at McQuade's side, his eyes lit with blue flames, his muscles taut. McQuade did not retreat. He stood his ground unwilling to give an inch, as stubborn in anger as he was in argument. The two men were much of the same build, but O'Malley's compact, well-knit frame was the slighter and supple with youth whereas McQuade's was hard with age, unyielding as a rock.

"You and the offices you control can't stop me, McQuade," the District Attorney said, his voice rising. "I am done with politics, but let me tell you that you are treading on dangerous ground when you come here seeking to intimidate me. Keep close to the wind, McQuade, or, by God, I'll have you in jail with your heelers. Your ignorance saves you. You don't know, perhaps, that you are within reach of the law when you come to me, a public officer, with threats. You are right in one thing; this is the office of the people. And as long as I

am the District Attorney I shall see that it is kept for the people and not for you or your organization. You can come here and say what you like about the conduct of this office but you can't come here with bribes or threats. You'd better get out."

O'Malley touched a bell on his desk and to the attendant who opened the door he said: "Send my stenographer here."

Then he turned to McQuade who, white with rage, his teeth hard set and his eyes burning behind his bushy eyebrows like the eyes of a wild beast in the dark, stood silent, swallowing back the words tumbling confusedly in his throat. "Now," said the District Attorney, "if you have anything further to say to me you can say it in the presence of a stenographer, but, remember, I've given you fair warning."

"Damn your warning," shouted McQuade. "You've turned on us like a snake, but it will cost you your place. You've become one of the Y.M.C.A. reformers, a fine lot, and it's where you belong. Well, you can sleep in their bed for you'll never get anything again from the party you've proved traitor to. I'll block you in the convention. If you think Heyward can help you, you'll soon learn your mistake. I'll make him promise to wash his hands of you or, by the Lord, it will cost him the state. Now, you can think that over."

He threw himself from the room almost knocking down the stenographer, who was entering. The last angry words struck on the young man's ears and he turned to the District Attorney in astonishment.

"Did you want me?" he asked when he had recovered from his encounter with the departing Boss.

"Never mind, Joe," Mr. O'Malley said to him with a smile of amusement, his control of his temper quickly re-established. "Mr. McQuade had something to say but—he's said it."

The District Attorney sat thinking over the ultima-

tum McQuade had delivered. He harbored no consoling delusion that the thwarted leader would be untrue to his threat nor had it come to him unexpectedly although surprised at the vehemence with which it had been made. He did not greatly blame McQuade. The Boss had been only true to his creed. In part, it was his own creed, for O'Malley held to the belief that parties were of basic importance to a republican government, although he and McQuade might differ in their ways of remaining steadfast in the faith. A man must own allegiance to an organization; if the organization were evil the remedy must be internal, not external. That belief he held to firmly. He had no desire or intention to oppose his party as an independent. If he fought at all the fight would be made in the party and not against it. But he was in no mood for fighting; he was surfeited with it. He felt that, for the present, he had done his share of the work and had earned a rest. He stood ready to make way for others for too-long political service had made him feel that he no longer belonged to himself but to those he represented and he cherished the wish to resume his place as an individual. McQuade's attitude left him free to begin the private practice of his profession.

Holman's offer had held a flattering inducement. There was large promise in the place, perhaps all that or more than Holman had suggested. But O'Malley could not bring himself to accept it. Somewhere back of his reasoning there was a distrust of Holman. It might be due to the man himself, an atmosphere of coldness that cloaked him, or it might be due to a prejudice against certain methods followed in his newspapers, cheap, insincere bids for popular approval permissible perhaps were they to be looked upon merely as makers of money for their already immensely wealthy owner but inconsistent with the higher educational ideals Holman professed.

O'Malley had been considering Holman's offer ever since it had been made, debating the good and the bad, and now, as if McQuade's visit had in some manner given a fillip to his desire to be rid of all ties, he wrote Holman his answer.

"Dear Mr. Holman:" the brief note ran, "I have kept under consideration your request that, when my present term of office expires, I become your personal attorney, postponing my decision until now that I might give the matter the attention it deserves. I regret that for purely personal reasons, I cannot accept your offer, desiring to make no engagements that could in any way prevent me from disposing of my entire time as I might see fit.

"In declining, permit me to express my appreciation of your courtesy and of the expressions of esteem that accompanied your request.

"With wishes for your continued success,

"I am,

"Very Sincerely Yours,

"Emmet O'Malley."

O'Malley could not tell why he felt more contented and at ease when the letter was signed, stamped and out of his hand. It had been difficult to relinquish the place for reasons no more substantial than those that had influenced him and the large salary Holman had promised together with the high plane upon which he had placed the position had made the offer most attractive. But now that his decision was made and he had declined Holman's proposal, perplexing doubts disappeared and O'Malley took up the volume of law reports on his desk still lying open at the case that should take away the last hope from McQuade's malefactors.

The District Attorney read the judge's decision through carefully, underscoring certain points. When he came to the end, the finding of the court sustaining

with convincing logic his own position, he put aside the volume and walked up and down applying the ruling to the case he was to argue. But presently he was aware that entering into his thoughts, as earlier in the day, was the remembrance of Mrs. Sylvestre. If he closed his eyes for a moment in his walk to form a phrase for the argument he was to make, he saw her as he had seen her in the park with the animal she rode out of control and racing away with her, a black, well-poised, well-formed figure against the light blue morning sky, or as she had been unconscious in the pharmacy, her hat removed, the black hair loose and in wavy profusion about her pale face with its closed eyes, the surgeon working quickly and deftly at the small bare foot arched and white with the blue veins showing. He wondered if she were still in pain. It had been a bad bruise, the surgeon had informed him privately before she had opened her eyes and one that had caused and would cause much suffering. O'Malley tried to picture her as she then was, perhaps undergoing torture, and his sympathy went out toward her as it had gone out toward her when he had first laid a hand on her arm and looked into her black eyes that tried to hide suffering in their depth. Was she a widow? That might account for the intangible air of tragedy. Was she divorced? That was more likely, he reasoned. He felt confident that she was not a contented wife reposing in the love and protection of her husband. Try as he would, he could not vanish her from his thoughts. Time and again she returned to excite his fancy and at last he gave up the attempt to work and, putting his papers in order, left the office. Whatever her station there could be no impropriety in calling at her home to make an inquiry as to the outcome of the accident. He summoned a cab and rode uptown, stopping on his way at a florist's. If she were suffering roses might cause her for a moment to forget her pain. With the flowers in the cab by his side he rode to Mrs. Sylvestre's home in Madison

avenue, his mind busy with thoughts of her and forgetful of Holman and his offer and McQuade and his threats.

McQuade, however, was not so quickly forgetful of O'Malley. He had walked back to his home, his hands plunged deep in his pockets, his mind feeding upon anticipated revenge. He made no idle threats and he would carry out to the letter all that he had said in anger to the District Attorney. Smarting from his rebuff it was no small satisfaction to plan a future that should eliminate O'Malley from public life. He let himself in with his large key, swinging back the heavy oak door and saw a boy, cap in hand, with hair as yellow as a crocus, sitting on the hall bench. The boy rose alertly and came forward.

"What do you want, boy?" growled the Boss, his humor expressed in his tone. But the boy was unafraid. "I've a letter for you, sir," he said.

"Letter for me, who from?"

"Mr. Holman, sir."

"Holman; what does he want?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Where is it?"

The boy produced Holman's letter from his cap and handed it to McQuade. The Boss took it, eying the messenger sharply.

"How long have you been here?"

"Half an hour, sir."

"Why didn't you leave it?"

"It's for you, sir, and I was told not to give it to anybody else."

McQuade tore open the envelope and read Holman's short note. "Hm," he grunted as he read. When he had finished he turned to the boy. "All right, lad; tell him I got it."

The boy was about to depart when McQuade called him back.

"Aren't you Tim Mulvane's boy, Frank?" he asked.

Xavier beamed his pleasure at the recognition. "Yes, sir," he answered with a grin.

"I thought so. How's your mother?"

"Very well, sir, thank you." Xavier was amazed at his own importance.

"Does she get her pension still?"

"Yes, sir."

"You're the oldest of the children, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"You work for David Holman?"

"Yes, sir."

"What doing?"

"I'm his office boy," Xavier replied, proud of the distinction.

"Give your money to your mother?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is the family getting along all right?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. I guess your mother knows she'll be looked after. Your father was a good man, my boy; loyal to his friends and his party, which is more than you can say of a good many. He was a brave and faithful man, Frank, and you look like him."

He held open the door and Xavier, brimming with pride and pleasure, skipped lightly down the steps and proceeded at a run to the office.

CHAPTER XIII

ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE TO PAY TOLL TO A KNIGHT OF THE PUBLIC HIGHWAY

True to Holman's expectations, McQuade struck at the glittering bait.

With his ear to the receiver, Holman dropped monosyllables into the mouth of the telephone until he was assured that it was really the Boss who was at the other end of the wire.

"Who delivered you the note?" he asked cautiously.

"A boy."

"Describe him."

"Yellow haired, freckled nosed and bright as a dollar. Why, it was Frank Mulvane, whose father, Tim Mulvane, was on the force. He lives here in my district. Don't you suppose I know the boys in my district?"

"That's convincing enough," Holman laughed. "Well, what about the subject of the note?"

"If you're agreeable to a meeting I'll send you word by letter. You can't trust to telephones; they leak."

"I suppose that's true."

"And if the newspapers get on to the fact that there's anything doing this far ahead between you and I—" McQuade sometimes exercised an unwise care in his grammar—"the game's up."

"Yes. Well, any time or any place you say; this city or another. I shall be glad to talk it over with you."

"All right, I'll let you know. There ain't any use trying to arrange matters before June, and the fewer meetings we have the better; one meeting ought to settle things. I just wanted to know how you stood. I'll write you. Goodbye."

"Hello," called Holman. "Wait a minute."

"Well?" questioned the Boss.

"If you should conclude that you wish an earlier conference don't set any date before, say, six weeks." By that time, Holman had reflected, he would know the results of Mendell's work. "In six weeks or so," he explained, "you may be better able to judge of the sentiment throughout the country which will help you, as well as me, to arrive at conclusions."

He heard McQuade's low chuckle over the wire. "Right you are," the Boss replied. "We must know what the public want so we can give it to 'em. Perfectly right."

The low chuckle crept over the wire again but Holman merely nodded his head toward the transmitter as one who defers the final laugh.

"Let me know some days in advance, though," he said. "I am rather busy these days and nights. Any time after six weeks. Goodbye." He hung up the receiver and placed the telephone out of the way upon his desk.

He had chosen another of the roads that were constantly opening out before him. Often now he stood where the ways parted, unable to determine definitely which it were wiser to follow, but never halting, going forward always, sometimes obliquely, sometimes directly, but always forward. He stood as one certain beyond peradventure of the goal he wished to attain, but perplexed by the numerous paths leading to it. In this hazard of his political fortunes he accepted little advice. He talked often with Fernald and listened attentively to his earnest philosophy. Holman had faith in Fernald's inspiration, but he was aware that the editorial writer's knowledge of the practical side of politics was lamentably meagre—the daily news from Mendell was more to the point. Holman held numerous conferences, most of them secret, with politicians; professed guides,

knowing the trails to political summits. He saw Senator Forney and became convinced, more strongly than ever, that Forney was well-nigh valueless to him. Determined, however, to make sure of whatever influence the former Senator might possess, he had held out again the prospect of a regained senatorship.

But the one man who loomed large in Holman's survey was McQuade. The silent, grim old Boss guarded the easiest road to success. Fernald, the dreamer, would have urged him to shun that path, but then Fernald would have sent him on his way a pilgrim, with only staff and script. Holman was too well aware that the solitary pilgrim was apt to fall among thieves or to faint by the wayside and he had no lofty intention of offering himself as a sacrifice, blazing the way that others might push on farther. That might serve for a Don Quixote like Fernald; for himself he preferred the safety of companions even if those companions were not of the worthiest. He would go by the way over which McQuade watched. If he paid toll to the old high-handed road-keeper he was but following the custom of the day.

Two days after his telephone message from McQuade Holman received by special messenger, an unsigned type-written letter. The man who delivered it would give it into no hands but his own.

"Pursuant to our conversation over the telephone," the communication read, "I would say that at ten o'clock on the night of Wednesday, June 15, I will be at a road-house near Port Chester, known as Mag Reardon's. If you do not know the place any one in Port Chester can tell you where it is. It is in Connecticut—a quarter of a mile over the state line. I shall be alone and you must be. Your chauffeur or servant can remain outside in the yard. I have selected this place because it is secluded and inaccessible to reporters, and the woman who runs it knows her business and will keep quiet. The house is in a big yard, back from the road and hidden in the

trees. If you cannot be present please let me know by letter; otherwise I will consider the matter arranged."

Holman read it through quickly. "There is no answer," he said to the waiting messenger. When the man had gone he read through the letter again more carefully.

"'I shall be alone and you must be,'" he quoted. "'Must be.'" He repeated the phrase. "You are beginning early, a little too early, Mr. McQuade, to say 'must' to me. But very well, I shall play you at your own game and we shall see how it comes out. It should be interesting—our little 'must-be-alone' meeting. I wonder how much you will want. But no treachery, mind you. Any false play; any juggling with the cards and, tough as you are, McQuade, I'll make you sorry you ever heard the name of David Holman."

It was in such spirit that Holman chose another of the roads that were leading on to his goal. If it ended in failure, it was to be deplored merely as a miscalculation of chances; if it led to success— The candidate closed his eyes to the brilliant sunshine flooding through the window and, exalted but tranquil as one to whom failure has never come, beheld the vision of all that success would mean.

CHAPTER XIV

MR. HOLMAN IN A GENTLER MOOD

It was not agreeable for David Holman to have his offer to Emmet O'Malley refused and in interpreting the District Attorney's note he was not slow to read the "personal reasons" advanced as signifying political considerations. O'Malley's support would have made his labor lighter and he did not intend to abandon all hope of obtaining this influence in some manner but, deprived, for the present at least, of such aid he squared his shoulders for the added burden, determined that the day should come when O'Malley would regret his action and promising himself that if the refusal were persisted in to the extent of open opposition he would crush the District Attorney as he intended to crush others.

In New York, Holman faced his hardest battle; the country outside was swayed by simpler methods. There the people gained their wish more easily and already it was being demonstrated that he was the people's choice. Newspapers were coming out in his support in every section. Men read of his glowing promises, of his fight against greed and corruption, of his sturdy, untiring warfare to crush public evils. To hundreds of thousands far from New York he had been heretofore merely an impersonal champion, formless, without outline; now, through vivid editorials, he stood out breathing, alive, human; a giant willing to lead their cause. They were no longer to be put off with men like Heyward, honest but passive, when, ready to fight with them and for them, was a strong man of action and unquestioned courage. How much of this sentiment was due to Holman's papers, how much to those subventioned journals

Mendell had supplied with promises and cash and how much to the honest judgment of editors who urged his name with no ulterior motive, even Holman himself could not tell. There were many, he knew, who, with no thought of gain, urged him forward as the most available candidate. The time was ripe for him. His clear vision had foreseen this day when the people would demand a champion and when they would no longer be content with figure-heads and the hollow principles of platform planks.

Every fibre of his brain was strained to the accomplishment of his purpose; every nerve stretched; every muscle bent. And because he had planned long and carefully and with calculating wisdom he counted with confidence upon the great body of men beyond the city of New York, in other cities and in the country to work his will. But in New York the situation was more complex; there men could laugh openly at the will of the people and money was too plentiful to be relied on as an inducement. There were too many ready to be generous when their generosity received reward. But McQuade was the shrewd old warder with the keys; deeper and craftier than all the others; shrewder even than the shrewd friends of Mrs. Van Alstyne who sought to make use of him, and Holman felt sure that when the time came he could negotiate successfully with McQuade for the major part if not all of the New York delegation. His telephone conversation and the one short, pointed letter received from the old Boss following quickly upon that conversation had inspired him with confidence as to the final result. In that eventual settlement it would be a simple question of price and he was no haggler when he got the thing he wanted. There was time enough to discuss terms and he was at one with McQuade in his willingness to postpone the discussion.

In these days of strenuous political activity Holman

had neither forgotten nor forgiven the insult of Mrs. Van Alstyne. Her rebuke had gone deeper than any other wound he had ever received, and Fernald's resumed denunciations of the "Mosquitoes of Society," which had brought forth letters innumerable from delighted readers, commending Holman's stalwart attitude and praising him as affording a practical example of his teachings by devoting his immense fortune unselfishly to the welfare of the Common People, had only partially healed his hurt pride. Stories detailing elaborately the prodigal entertainments of the "Drones" appeared in the *Epoch* and, in the illustrations, one could be sure of finding snap-shots of Mrs. Van Alstyne which revealed the fading beauty but never fading figure of that lady, with all the uncharitableness of the instantaneous photograph.

Mrs. Van Alstyne, however, no longer occupied the important place she had held in Holman's mind before and immediately after his visit to Deep Glen. The ugly vision of her face, hard with hate as he remembered it, faded. He was not the less determined to punish the arrogant woman but his thoughts were fastened now, not upon her, but upon her niece. No day passed, no hour even, when his mind was free from thoughts of Harriet Stowers. Hard work during the past fortnight, the hardest his life that had been crowded with hard work, had ever known, did not serve to efface her memory or to draw him aside from his cherished plan. So often did he dwell upon it that it became a part of him. He waited patiently until the time should come when her aunt's animosity should have been nearly forgotten. He was willing to present the appearance of complete defeat in order that Mrs. Van Alstyne, secure in victory, might not seek to carry her enmity further. Holman did not doubt that the incident at Deep Glen had become the property of men's clubs and women's teas, serving idle mouths as a savory morsel of gossip, and he was par-

ticularly desirous that Mr. Stowers, who, if forced to take sides would naturally defend the conduct of his sister-in-law, should not have an opportunity to show his displeasure until the incident had run its course of discussion and had been forgotten or had lost its importance. It was difficult for Holman to wait, but he was determined that he would not jeopard Harriet's friendship by haste. He would do nothing now that could harm the cause that had become so dear to him.

Holman hoped that he might meet Miss Stowers by chance on the street or while driving in the park. In his morning or afternoon motor trips or on his way to the Speedway, for he had not outgrown his Western love of horses, Holman had passed before Miss Stowers' home in Sixty-fifth street in the hope of catching sight of her. He was convinced that she would not fail to accord him recognition and he hoped that her smile or bow might be construed as an invitation to stop and exchange words with her. But, in spite of the fact that he changed his hours for passing her house, the object of his persistent search continued to elude him. Piqued by his failure to find her, Holman became more than ever determined not to abandon his quest. Disappointment served merely to give a keener edge to his desire.

Harriet Stowers had thought of David Holman probably not so often as Holman had thought of her, but, also, in a way that differed from her consideration of other men. He had forced her to believe in him; in his ability, no less than in his sincerity; not by any professions that he had made but by the very modesty with which he spoke of his purposes and the simple, straightforward, unboasting discussion of his acts of charity and brotherhood that were known to her from actual observation. His reserve she knew cloaked a tower of strength and, by comparison, she experienced a contempt for the assertive, self-seeking weaklings who were loud in their

criticisms of him. In offset to their unweighed words she thought of his actions; opposed to their heated vituperation he stood, calm and sure of himself, great enough to ignore their abuse. Their shallow, selfish aims served to make him appear in her eyes, an ideal of true manliness, and, with all her kind heart, she wished for him success and victory in the fight that he was making. With a thrill of pride and pleasure she read and heard the increasing mention of his name for the nation's highest place and it came to her more than once as a regret that she could not aid him.

Harriet wondered why Mr. Holman had not called again, reaching the conclusion that her aunt's insult had offended him so deeply that he did not care to risk meeting Mrs. Van Alstyne again in the home of her niece. But for the seeming immodesty of it she would have asked Mr. Pemberton to bring Holman to see her or she would have written him had an excuse offered, but no pretext presented itself and she tried to assuage her disappointment with the hope that when her aunt had left town or when Mr. Holman had ceased to remember the petty inexcusable spite of Mrs. Van Alstyne, he would endeavor to renew their friendship.

Holman's car turned into Sixty-fifth street from Madison avenue one perfect afternoon in early April just in time to afford him a glimpse of Miss Stowers as she entered her father's house. The sight stirred him unexpectedly and he bent far forward in the hope that she might glance in his direction. But the door closed and hid her from sight; she had not seen him. Acting upon the moment's impulse, Holman called to the driver to stop and, leaping from the car, rang the bell of Miss Stowers' home. The door opened almost instantly. A footman took his card and ushered him into a small reception room. Even the formal Louis Seize furniture spoke to Holman of the young mistress of the house; its brightness and airy cheerfulness seemed borrowed from

her. He was calm enough, now that, at last, he was waiting for her answer, but it was the calmness of one who is master of himself and not the apathy of indifference, for he believed that, in some way he could not clearly discern, into the next few moments would be crowded years of his future.

Holman remained standing, waiting for her, putting away by force of will, the thought that, after all, she might refuse to see him. He had not long for reflection, for Miss Stowers, still wearing her hat and with only the right glove removed, appeared in the doorway. Her greeting dissipated the mist of any lingering doubts. Upon her lips was a smile of welcome and in her eyes the light of pleasure at seeing him again. She came toward him eagerly.

"How glad I am you have come," she said, her brown eyes raised frankly to his. "I had about concluded," she laughed, "that you were visiting the sins of the aunts upon the nieces, even to me."

"I should have been here sooner if I had dared." Holman bent over her hand, his dreams of her made real by the friendliness mirrored in her cordial welcome.

"Dared? I am disappointed. I thought you dared do anything." Her happiness to have him there found expression in her laughter.

"Perhaps, except to make you suffer on my account," he answered with seriousness. "I feared your aunt might extend her vengeance to you," he added with a smile.

"My aunt and I are not very congenial, I regret to say." Miss Stowers shook her head ruefully.

Holman shivered in exaggerated dread. "She frightens me," he avowed. "I tremble when I think of how I was annihilated by a word."

"I have seen her only once since then," Miss Stowers laughed. "She didn't refer to it—not one word, but she will never forget it."

"You were very good to me that day. I wish you to

know that I am grateful." He was serious again and a little tremor in Harriet's heart made her wish to keep him in a lighter mood.

"You have been long in acknowledging it," was all she said, but in her tone and smile there was a hint of friendly banter. She was playing the old game of hide-and-seek, advancing only to flee at the other's approach. Holman, who read her sex quickly, as he read his own, looked upon it as the coquetry of the dance that women lead men, the forward and back of Friendship's first measure, and surprised her by the swiftness of his pursuit.

"I have ridden past here almost every day since last I saw you, sometimes twice a day in the vain hope that I might see you again," he informed her.

She blushed at his frank avowal. Truly this was a Western way of proceeding that admitted of no temporizing. She realized that he was still standing, her eagerness to see him having betrayed her into a forgetfulness of the commonplaces.

"I had been wondering how you would receive me," he continued, "or if you would receive me at all."

She made an effort to get to safe level ground. "Now that you are here, and welcome, won't you remove your overcoat and remain? I have been shopping and had just returned for tea when you came. Will you have a cup of tea with me?"

But in spite of herself she could not keep her tongue to innocuous topics. He had started into the hall to give the man his coat when she called after him, her voice rising almost vexatiously.

"Why should you have doubted me—your reception, I mean?" she corrected hastily.

Holman came back to where she stood.

"I was wrong." He said it softly as one confessing an unpardonable sin. "I shall not doubt you again."

Holman looked at her unquestioningly. She was very beautiful as she stood there, tall and fair, surrounded by her belongings that seemed to be such a part of her. He considered that he had never before seen as beautiful a woman and this thought was brought to him again later as she was pouring tea, the surroundings of her home lending to her an atmosphere of domesticity which fitted well her gentleness.

"I have heard you talked of on every side recently," she assured him and he was quick to read the approval in her glance. "Your name is in every paper. It must be very flattering to one's self-esteem to be such a celebrity." Her voice had in it the good-humored challenge that had so captivated him during their automobile ride. For the second time in her presence he reproached himself for permitting in the *Epoch* an exploitation of personalities which was apt to be offensive to her. In the reflection that she might have seen his recent attacks upon society, correctly interpreting their motive, his revenge upon Mrs. Van Alstyne lost its sweetness. Holman, however, was careful to keep the course of conversation clear of these obstacles.

"I suppose," he answered her, "that I, at least, cannot decry publicity. I hope, however," he added, his voice expressing a genuine solicitude, "that those who have painted me as the archetype of all modern anarchy, a veritable raven of ill omen, have not been able to influence you."

She shook her head. "Oh, no," she answered. "There were those undoubtedly who, before the deluge, scorned Noah, but the flood came nevertheless. You are fond of referring in your editorials to the French revolution. Well, were there not those aristocrats who laughed at the idea of a conflagration while in the very act of feeding the flames? The women of the salons, even the wise Mme. d Staël, you remember, smiled at all warnings of danger. There were people at the Iroquois theatre fire

who shouted that all was safe when the possibility of escape was even then gone."

He looked at her surprised to discover how deeply planted had been the seed of the gospel he had preached in his papers. She returned his glance.

"No," she concluded, "those who try to hide the truth cannot influence me."

"My dear Miss Stowers," Holman responded, "the fool who brings the warning is only too often kicked for his pains. It is the price that the missionary must expect to pay. My only object is that the *Epoch* and my other papers, shall be representative of the People, the Real People, the majority, who have been dumb so long. You must sympathize with them or you could not have done what you have done or say what you have just said; you have heard the pitiful cry of these long-denied, the cry for equality."

"Surely, Mr. Holman," she appealed, "there must be some way to right the wrong. It is awful: the suffering on every side of us. One sees it in the streets, in the parks, in the stores and, oh, so much of it in the homes of the poor. It must be wrong."

Harriet looked at him as a disciple might look upon a revered philosopher of whom he had sought advice.

"It is wrong, Miss Stowers," Holman answered, his gray eyes dark, a frown upon his face, "radically wrong. We may not be able to eradicate all the world's suffering but common justice will lift many of these unfortunates from their distressing lot. We call this country a democracy, but it is really an oligarchy with the government in the hands of a few unscrupulous men who take from the mouths of these starving people the bread of opportunity."

Harriet's eyes were soft with sympathy. "It distresses me to see so much unhappiness and to be unable to relieve it," she told him. "I envy you men who can go into the arena and fight for these helpless creatures.

Sometimes the disregard of my friends for people they thrive upon but never see, or their worse than indifference to servants who live and sleep under the same roof with them, seems terrible to me. I think they have wilfully blinded themselves to our common origin. I cannot believe that they mean to be so cruel. I have seen all that you describe but when I seek to show it to my friends they will not see; they will not listen; they refuse to believe."

Holman lifted his hand. There was nothing of the cleric about him but to Harriet Stowers he seemed, at that moment, to be the High Priest of a persecuted people, presenting their wrongs with simple dignity, and she nodded in trustful acquiescence as he said magnanimously:

"They are like those others for whom was breathed the noblest prayer the world has ever heard—'they know not what they do'."

The warm afternoon light pervaded the pleasant room. Shafts of sunshine played upon the furniture. A bar of light rested gently on Miss Stowers' face, converting into gold the light brown of her hair and sharply defining her regular profile. Holman, struck by the picture she presented, paused abruptly, midway in a sentence, to regard her, and it so happened that, at the same moment, Miss Stowers, unable to see him because of the sun in her eyes, changed her attitude.

"Please don't move," he asked.

The unexpectedness of the request startled her and she looked up at him in inquiry.

"The sun on your hair is so beautiful," he explained. "The light is as yellow as Rembrandt's yellow in the Night Watch."

She loved Amsterdam, largely for that one picture, and they fell to talking of Holland and Belgium and, at last, of France.

"Once for an entire year I lived in Paris debating the

future," he confided to her. "It was the most wonderful year of my life, and, in some respects, the happiest, for it was a year of dreams. I had worked hard, desperately hard, and had made more money than, as a boy, I had imagined any one man could possess. Then, when I was thirty-two, I went straight to Paris to make up my mind whether it were pleasanter to live in idleness, reading, seeing pictures, growing wise in a lovely, detached, abstract way or to live here, making my place among my fellow countrymen, working hard, struggling, helping all I could to hew out the paths for progress. At the end of a year I was back again in America and—" his voice fell and a shadow of sadness darkened his face—"and, even when they have said about me the things you must have read and, maybe, heard, I have never regretted my decision."

Miss Stowers listened, flattered by Holman's confidence. She divined that he was revealing to her a part of his life that was not often uncovered to view and, with an imagination quickened by sympathy, she filled in the picture he had so sketchily outlined. She thought of him during his dream-year like the *wanderjahr* of the German student, finding expression for his artistic nature in the beautiful things of the older world, enjoying all that he had been denied but which his wealth could now bring, and, in the end, renouncing a life of luxurious dilettanteism and returning home to labor, feared, reviled and hated, and, except for that intangible adoration of the Unimportant Many, alone in his task. The hero-worship that most men and all women are ever ready to accord, flamed within her.

The afternoon sped quickly. Mr. Stowers came in from downtown and was on his way out again to his club when Harriet called to him.

"Father, I wish you to meet Mr. David Holman," she said, as Mr. Stowers entered the room. He was a dapper well-cared-for little man with florid face and

white close-cropped side whiskers and moustache, holding himself straight as a drum-major and going about his business in life briskly. He glanced sharply at the man of whom he had heard so much, greeting his daughter's visitor with the pompous cordiality of a man well aware that he is in his own fine house, nodding approvingly as Harriet said to him: "I have met Mr. Holman only recently, but I have already learned to value his friendship very much."

All that his daughter did was flawless in the eyes of Mr. Montgomery Stowers and his conviction that Holman must be worthy if Harriet claimed him for a friend, was strengthened by the agreeable impression Holman's pleasant conversation made. Mr. Stowers remained longer than he had intended away from his friends. He was not at all averse to meeting a man placed so prominently before the public gaze and he anticipated with genuine delight the sensation he would create later in his club, by describing Holman as he was to those who had never met him but had so violently abused him, not the Holman of their limited knowledge but the real Holman of his own personal acquaintance. He saw himself as the center of an admiring group commanding respectful attention and the picture appealed to his vanity.

Before Holman left the house he had accepted gladly an invitation from Harriet to call again the next afternoon for tea.

CHAPTER XV

MRS. SYLVESTRE'S SUFFERING IS NOT WITHOUT COMPENSATION

Zaidee Sylvestre's injured foot mended slowly. Imprisoned in her room and, as yet, unable to descend the stairs, she was a prey to disturbing thoughts, suffering the torments of those who are mentally active but who have never schooled themselves to indulge that activity in pursuing the thoughts of others as expressed in books. If she tried to read—and she made more than one weak attempt to concentrate her attention on a novel—the actual complexities of her own situation soon proved a more fascinating problem than the fancied distress of the heroine or hero of the fiction. Her lively imagination created scenes and circumstances in which she was a central figure and which so compelled her interest that her mind soon strayed from the printed page. The actress in her nature dramatized the situation in which she now found herself, and she rang the curtain up and down on swiftly changing scenes.

In all the long years of their friendship Holman had never been so neglectful and Zaidee might have languished had not a new and romantic interest been unexpectedly offered her, as if in compensation for what she seemed about to lose. On the day after the accident, even while Zaidee was compassionately weeping over Captain's curls in recollection of Holman's cruel words of the night before, a maid appeared at her door, visibly excited.

"There's a strange gentleman below in the hall, ma'am," she gasped, for a strange gentleman was unusual in that

house. The maid's excitement communicated itself in diminished measure to Zaidee as, intuitively, her thought flew to her rescuer of the day before.

"Didn't he give you any message?" she asked. The servant's startled memory fluttered back to her mission.

"Oh, yes, ma'am. He said I was to inquire very particularly about your foot and ask if you was better, ma'am."

"Didn't he give you a card?" There was another startled leap of the girl's memory.

"He give me a box, ma'am, a long box, an' he give me a card an' I put the box down to get my tray, an' I must 've put the card on the box, ma'am, an' left it below in the hall." She stared stupidly at the empty tray in her hand as if it had been confederate in the legerdemain.

"Por Dios!" The expletive escaped Zaidee's lips. "Is he still below? What does he look like?"

The maid, unable to encompass the two questions, ignored the former and bent her energies to the latter. "He's red-headed, ma'am, an' handsome." She added the last with conviction.

"Is he—is he the gentleman who helped to bring me home yesterday?" Zaidee asked. "You saw the gentleman with me, the gentleman who aided me?"

The butterfly memory was a-wing again, frightened by the pursuing questions.

"Ah, ma'am," the perplexed girl answered, "I was that frightened when yez was brought into the house, so white, ma'am, I wouldn't 've seen an' angel standin' by ye."

It was hopeless. Zaidee abandoned the attempt to elicit information from her.

"Stupid, then try to remember this: Tell the gentleman, if he is still waiting, that I thank him for his kind inquiry and that, due to him, my injury is not serious. Can you remember that? Try to repeat it in those words."

The maid left precipitately. Zaidee shook her head, wondering what her message would be when Mr. O'Malley received it.

From the hall below came voices, the gurgle of the maid's explosive utterance, the gentle rise and fall of the man's words, a suspicious clink of silver and the maid's "thankee sir, thankee sir," as the door closed, and Zaidee marked an incriminating blush when the servant reappeared, this time bearing the box and Emmet O'Malley's card.

Zaidee opened the box herself and, for a moment, was silent before the beauty of the long-stemmed roses, fresh and wet, as if taken after a recent shower and sealed in their long resting place with the dew still upon their petals. Her love of beauty went out in gratitude toward the flowers. She caught them up, as if they were human and could thrill at her touch.

"Dios mio, what roses!" she exclaimed. "How beautiful you are!"

She pressed the blossoms against her lips. Their Hymettian sweetness soothed her soul. Of all the companions Nature has given to man nothing so nearly speaks to him as flowers. Their perfume seems at times articulate but too subtle for interpretation. The sight of a field of poppies, slumbering in the sun, or sleeping among tall grasses and glimpsed only for an instant from a speeding car; the prospect of a formal garden filled with vari-colored blooms, as gay as a painting by Watteau; a wayside marigold, exert over the beholder an influence stronger than anything else, that is not human, can exert. Into Zaidee's room, darkened by clouds of foreboding, Emmet O'Malley's roses brought sunshine and her eyes, so lately tear-stained, beheld a rainbow of promise.

Throughout a night when slumber was made fitful by her pain, O'Malley and Holman shared her waking thoughts, her anguish in the dark possibility of Holman's

desertion becoming endurable in the remembrance of O'Malley's solicitude. The morning found her strangely at odds with her own emotions, but as the day wore on the weaker optimism in her nature surrendered. She dwelt upon Holman's tenderness with Captain and, in comparison with this affectionate comradeship, his attitude toward her seemed the refinement of cold indifference. She recalled her reference to Mr. Pemberton and the fact that she had sought illumination without avail convinced her that Holman had strong reasons for keeping her in the dark regarding his new friends. Her suspicions were converted into certainty.

It relieved her to write a note of acknowledgment to Mr. O'Malley, and the time spent upon its composition was the brightest of all the day. It was a girl's note, rather than a woman's, superlative in its expression of appreciation, conveying more than it was meant to convey, and overrun with French words that seemed to her to hold a deeper, dearer meaning than their English equivalents.

Emmet O'Malley read it more than once and kept it. And yet the note baffled him as much as Zaidee herself, for though it was cordial in the extreme there was no invitation to call again and no suggestion that their acquaintance should continue. Had her words been more formal he might have read a rebuff in this omission, but, reading it over again, he could construe the note in no other way than as the ready acceptance of a proffered friendship. More than ever the air of mystery hovered over the woman he had aided and through the week that followed he tormented himself with useless speculation. He was not known among men as a dreamer of chivalric dreams and no one would have regarded him as a squire of dames romantically serving ladies in distress and yet the conviction grew upon O'Malley that here was a woman who stood in need of a friend and, unable to rid himself of this belief, he rang again at Mrs. Sylvestre's

door, leaving as before flowers she seemed so highly to appreciate.

Zaidee did not dare the disloyalty to Holman that her act in receiving Mr. O'Malley would appear to involve but excitedly, smiling at the suffering her action caused her, she limped to the window, and, screened by the lace curtains, watched her visitor depart. O'Malley paused with his foot on the step of the hansom and, turning, looked directly at the window where Zaidee was. Instinctively she drew back and when she dared look out again the cab was far down the avenue. Her pulse beat faster as she wondered whether he could have seen her through the draperies.

Zaidee found it easier during the rest of the afternoon to ride the storm of her disquieting doubts. When her alarms threatened to toss her back upon a sea of despair, she found a haven in the remembrance of Emmet O'Malley, her intuition, to which she never failed to trust implicitly, suggesting to her that his friendship was a refuge where, upon some occasion, she might be forced to take shelter.

That night when the lively conflict of her emotions robbed her of sleep she wrote to him again. This second note was to disturb O'Malley even more than her first had done. "I cannot tell you," Zaidee wrote, "how much your beautiful roses have meant to me nor how very much I thank you for them. They have made life seem brighter and even now they comfort me as I write late at night, unable to sleep because of suffering *infiniment plus dur* than the injury to my foot has caused. Sometimes I think that flowers are our truest, dearest friends. I hope that we shall meet again soon that I may tell you of my gratitude better than I am able to write it."

During the days that followed O'Malley's second visit to Mrs. Sylvestre Holman remained away from her and Zaidee saw the dream of her girlhood fading rapidly. He had written once, a week after the accident, a brief,

careful, courteous note in which her critical eyes could find no tenderness, informing her that the pressure of business would make it impossible to see her for several days and expressing the hope that she was rapidly recovering. Captain had brought to Zaidee the note and was by her side when she read it. The restrained tears hung upon her long lashes and ran slowly down her cheeks. In vain she sought to hide the pain in her heart caused by the letter's lack, bending over the head of the boy, burying her face in his curls and kissing him passionately, that he might not detect her sorrow.

It was Captain who put a point to her dull musings. He caught sight of the roses left by Mr. O'Malley earlier in the afternoon and still lying in the open box, for so closely had Holman's note followed O'Malley's gift that Zaidee had been interrupted in preparing a place for the flowers. The sight of the roses brought from the child a shrill chirp of delight. He ran toward his mother and put his arm round her as if to share his joy.

"Did Amigo send the beautiful flowers to Mamacita?" he asked. For answer Zaidee kissed him.

"Amigo is so good and kind," the boy continued. "Amigo loves Mamacita as I do; my Amigo!"

"Your Amigo, indeed!" muttered Zaidee bitterly.

Captain came to his mother and kissed her. "Mamacita is better," he said, "I am very glad. But why doesn't Amigo come any more?"

Zaidee put aside his question with a caress. A new and wonderful thing was happening; this silent, eerie child whom she had long regarded as a being from another and superior world, needing all her gentle care and consideration to induce him to retain a place among mortals, was beginning to love her in a way that she could understand. His spirit had seemed always about to be crushed by her tempestuous affection and she had realized early that any demonstration overwhelmed him, terrifying him by a robustness he could not hope to emu-

late. Her inclination was often to catch him to her, pouring out her pent-up love, but she restrained herself, fearing to see his little humming-bird affection take wing. She envied Holman his companionship with the boy, for Captain appeared to understand and delight in the man's assumed roughness; perhaps it was because it was assumed and he realized that sentimental demonstration was as foreign to his Amigo's nature as to his own that the boy had admitted Holman to his fellowship and excluded Zaidee, little knowing the anguish he caused.

And now it was all changing. Something brought to Captain's precocious mind the knowledge that his beautiful Mamacita was groaning under a heavy burden and, in his desire to offer sympathy, he cast aside the fragility that had marked him since babyhood and became his mother's friend. He stole to her and gave her little bird-like kisses; he lost much of his reserve and even affected a playful boisterousness; he returned Zaidee's caresses. They grew to depend upon each other and he forsook almost altogether his beloved nursery for her society.

This awakening of her child's love, wonderful to Zaidee, did much to reconcile her to Holman's silence. She faced the possibility of his ultimate desertion with comparative resignation and determined that, at least, she owed him no present allegiance that should make her renounce the pleasure of Mr. O'Malley's acquaintance. Affairs could drift on as they would, without her seeking to direct them.

Zaidee had been confined to her room for a fortnight or more when, late one afternoon, Holman called. It was the afternoon he had first had tea alone with Miss Stowers and he had just left her. He ran up the steps to Zaidee's room, his mind still occupied with crowding thoughts.

"Where's Captain? I want to take him for a ride,"

he asked, adding, but too late to conceal from Zaidee how secondary she had become in his thoughts: "How are you? How's your foot? Getting on all right? I've been intending to run in every day but have been kept away on business."

Zaidee's jealousy stung her angrily. She did not answer his questions. "Why are you in such a hurry to take Captain a ride?" she asked.

He caught the angry menace in her voice; she seemed bent upon irritating him. "It is late," he explained coldly, "and I wish to take the boy for a short spin before dark." He asked again more sternly: "Where is he?"

She was ready to decline to answer his peremptory question but thought better of it and responded sullenly: "In the nursery."

Holman strode quickly through the room and soon she heard his voice ring gladly as he saluted the boy, the child's happy treble piping an unusually loud greeting. Her jealousy still burned hot. She was for bringing matters to a climax, accusing Holman of neglect and confronting him with her knowledge of his deceit. At least, she could show him that she was aware of his lie about Austin Pemberton and, inferentially, Harriet Stowers and he must wince under that. A fortnight before she would not have hesitated but she was learning the value of composure and deliberation.

When Holman returned he found her, to all appearance, subdued, and it surprised him that the threatened outburst had been averted. He held Captain by the hand, the boy's wistful face peeping out from the furs.

"Tell Mamacita *hasta luego*," he suggested, and the child ran eagerly to his mother.

"*Hasta luego*," he chirped and gave Zaidee a kiss.

"Goodbye," Holman said. He bent over Zaidee. "You must not be offended with me if I stay away. You cannot realize how busy, how frightfully driven, I am these days by politics and the paper." He paused.

"They are trying to make me President, Mamacita. Would that surprise you?"

"Nothing would surprise me," she confessed gloomily. Her grasp of the meaning of politics was not large but she believed that he would force his way to success in that field as he had with his mine and his newspapers.

"That might have a double meaning," he laughed. "But, there, you are still vexed with me. Well, the convention will be here soon and then—then I will make up for lost time." He laid his hand gently on Zaidee's shoulder but she did not respond.

"Come along, Captain, out with you, you grizzly bear." Holman made a pretence of forcing the pleased child out of the room. At the door he paused and looked at his watch.

"It's late," he said, "but we shall have plenty of time for a nice run, maybe up the river. We'll be back before seven."

He swung the boy to his shoulders and carried him down the stairs.

CHAPTER XVI

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING

Zaidee heard the tooting horn of the automobile as it turned the corner bearing away Captain and David Holman, and it seemed to her that the echo of this retreating trumpet was still sounding when the maid appeared with Mr. O'Malley's card. His advent so opportune and complementary to her gloomy introspection startled her just as in a play the entrance of the hero or the villain at a critical moment startles the audience, thrilling it with intense expectancy. It was as if Mr. O'Malley now appeared again as a rescuer, this time to save her from a peril not the less real because it was not physical. Zaidee's debate on previous afternoons whether she could see Mr. O'Malley began again, but Holman's fresh exhibition of indifference and his unconvincing protestations afforded a conclusive argument.

"Is the gentleman waiting?" Zaidee asked the maid, unable to suppress a tremor of excitement at the adventure she contemplated.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Bring me my glass," Zaidee gave the order to the servant in a tone that invited opposition in order to crush it.

With the deft touch of one skilled in the performance, Zaidee added color to blanched cheeks and brilliancy to eyes dimmed by recent weeping. Excitedly she directed the maid to aid her and, together, their hands flew to the task of preparing the patient for her waiting visitor. Zaidee was dressed in a Chinese kimona, a precious part of the loot that resulted when the Allies extended civilization, and she now regarded with satis-

faction the red satin and gorgeous embroidery, knowing well that no other garment she possessed so adorned her. When the last touch was put to her hair and the maid, with a final flutter, stood aside to gaze approvingly at the effect, Zaidee lay back among the pillows of silk and lace on the divan.

"Tell the gentleman I wish to see him. He may come up here." She was unable to conceal the tremor in her voice.

Emmet O'Malley, passing the servant who had bowed him into the room, stopped at the doorway. His remembrance of Mrs. Sylvestre as she fled on her horse down the bridle-path and afterward as she lay pale and unconscious in the surgeon's care, wildly beautiful as he had then considered her, had not prepared him for this vision of Andalusian loveliness, as suggestive as a night filled with stars. He went to the couch and bent low over the hand Zaidee held languidly up to him. All that he had meant to say, the phrase half-jest, half-earnest, he had coined on his way upstairs, died on his lips and he struggled with the thoughts the Oriental picture she presented sent surging through his brain to which he could give no utterance. Again he was aware of an impression, shadowy but ineffacable, that, somewhere, he had seen this woman before that ride in the park. It was Zaidee who spoke first. Mr. O'Malley's hesitation, amounting almost to confusion, reassured her vanity and she became mistress of her own emotions through the knowledge that she was dominating the impulses of the man before her.

She sighed before she said: "I wished to thank you for your exquisite flowers. It was as kind of you as they were beautiful." Her remembered voice awoke him. He released her hand and took a chair by her side.

"Do you know," he laughed, "I wondered if you were beginning to think of me as pursuing you; there seemed

no escape for you. It is unfair when a person is crippled to bombard her as I have been bombarding you; one can neither fight nor run away." He smiled at her deprecatory gesture. "But flowers are such personal things," he continued, "that I can never bear to have them delivered by a florist; that is cut-flowers," he added, his eyes twinkling with merriment; "I have never yet followed my theory to the point of carrying potted plants in my arms when making a call; palms or rubber-plants or some of the big weed-flowers, like chrysanthemums, might prove a trifle burdensome."

Zaidee's laugh, like little silver bells, ran an arpeggio and O'Malley continued, his wit quickened by her mirth. "In all truth, flowers are so close to one, like a breath or a perfume, that I can never be reconciled to the idea of having my offerings dropped at my friend's door as one drops a suit of clothes or a bolt of cloth or a sack of flour. Really, I should almost as soon send a sack of flour or a ham. I always picture either a big, burly negro—negroes are always burly, you know—in livery, inquiring: 'Does dese heah flowahs belong heah?' or else a small red-headed boy—I was once a small red-headed boy, so I am pretty familiar with their ways—who rings at the bell: 'Say, does a Mrs. Sylvestre live here?'" He imitated perfectly the insouciance of the street urchin. "'Well, den, here's a box for her, but yez have got ter sign. See!'" O'Malley made a pantomime of the boy hastily ridding himself of his burden. "And," he continued to the accompaniment of Zaidee's laughter, "I always fancy my poor roses or violets, or whatever unhappy flower it may be, lying there, helpless in the box, forgotten in a great hall, left by a careless maid, and crying out against such cruel treatment, but, alas! with no one to hear them. And by and by, oh! hours afterward, Mrs. Sylvestre receives the 'box,' the flowers wilted, dying, unable to come back to life and beauty, even for her sake. And that's the reason," he

concluded as if there were need for apology—"the reason why I have brought the flowers in person. Am I forgiven?"

He spoke with elaborate drollery, disguising with jest the sentiment his words held. And to Zaidee how pleasant it was to hear his laughter in that room where laughter so rarely echoed. How the tonic of his good-humor invigorated her.

"There is no need for an apology, Mr. O'Malley," she assured him. "I am your grateful patient. You have been a preventive and a cure; not content with saving my life—" He raised his hand in protest—"Well, at least, then, saving me from grave injury, by your thoughtful gifts you speed my recovery."

"Do you know, they did try to make a doctor out of me."

"You would have been a great success," she interposed.

"But I was so chicken-hearted I couldn't stand the sight of suffering."

"You ran away?"

"No; it wasn't necessary. They gave it up of their own accord, finally. They became convinced I didn't have the brains necessary to become a doctor, I suppose. And then they made me into a lawyer—it's where a lot of failures come to at last."

"Through failure to success. They have a Spanish proverb about that."

He would not have it so. "Success is a tremendously big word," he said, but what he was thinking was—"So she is Spanish, or perhaps—"

Zaidee gave him no time for speculation. "Surely it must be attaining success to be a good district attorney who brings all the wicked to punishment."

"Ah, the wicked," he laughed. "The wicked too often escape; it is the ignorant who are punished. The really wicked are generally so wise that they wriggle out of the net; the poor and foolish are caught."

The compassion that lay under his raillery reminded Zaidee of the reason he had given for abandoning the profession of medicine.

"You must see much suffering," she said, wondering how many women had bared their hearts to his kind sympathy. "Lawyers, next to doctors, I think, see most of the world's woe."

The smile died away and his blue eyes were grave as he answered. "Yes; the District Attorney's office is like a confessional. A continuous procession passes through his doors: a procession of the sinned against and the sinning."

"Doesn't it depress you to see so much suffering that you cannot relieve?"

The frank eyes contracted threateningly. "It consoles me that, sometimes, I can reach those who caused the suffering."

"Yes, that must be pleasant." Her laugh tinkled again. "I should love to be the Public Executioner."

"To bring your enemies to the block?"

"No; my friends." Was there danger in the flash of those dark eyes, he wondered.

"May I offer myself as one for martyrdom?" asked O'Malley quickly.

Zaidee drew back from the peril of his proffered friendship. "Oh, no," she cried, adding as she saw his astonishment, "you deserve a better fate."

It was too late. The sharp eye of the lawyer, trained to read the countenance of unwilling witnesses, had seen the shadow of pain upon her startled face. Her quick wit could not obliterate the impression it conveyed to him. He had seen that look before upon the faces of many women in that confessional of which he had told her, and it had never meant but one thing—some man had caused them the sorrow they sought to hide. He fitted this experience to the present case, believing that in her startled look of mingled fear and grief he had read a

part of her secret but neither his words nor his attitude revealed his suspicions.

"Since, then, I am not to be sacrificed as a friend," Mr. O'Malley replied, his good-humor undiminished, "I shall remain neutral. You cannot drive me over to your enemies, if you have any."

"I have none," she assured him, "except, perhaps, myself."

"That puts me in a quandary. I cannot tell whether I would be on your side or the side of your enemy which is yourself."

She laughed again gaily as he elaborated into absurdity his perplexity, but her laughter could not rid him of the idea that she was unhappy, and, somewhat later in the afternoon, this intimation fell from her again unexpectedly. They were talking of the theatres, a topic congenial to them both.

"I prefer tragedy to comedy," she asserted.

"Ah, that's a sure sign of youth," he replied.

She shook her head as she lifted her fan. A perfume, faint and delicate, came to O'Malley. He observed that the fan was of ivory exquisitely carved and yellow with age; Spanish scenes were painted on its parchment surface. In some manner the perfume that its breezes carried across to him as from distant orange groves brought with it the tantalizing sensation that he was on the very verge of recalling where he had seen her before. He watched the slow, rhythmic motion of her wrist as the fan swayed; he saw a large ruby and a diamond of Mazarin pink on the fingers of her left hand and in the same hand was a handkerchief of lace wonderfully wrought, but he looked in vain for the plain gold band that should tell of her unhappy marriage. As if unconscious of his scrutiny she went on talking.

"I do not think that laughter makes us forget our grief," she was saying, "except, perhaps for the moment the laugh lasts." She lifted the handkerchief slowly to

her lips; the fan ceased swaying and she allowed her gaze to fall upon it as she continued. "In tragedy, though, we hear expressions given to our own sorrows and I think in that way we obtain relief, the relief that the expression of a grief always brings; the comfort that we find in telling our unhappiness to some one."

She looked up at him and saw that his attention was fastened searchingly upon her. "I have had too much of tragedy in my own life," she continued, "to find my chief enjoyment in comedy."

He was silent, waiting for her to speak again, for her words seemed the introduction to further information about herself. As the recollection of her early life, the unprotected, motherless days of her youth, the isolation of her girlhood and her present loneliness surged over her in a great wave of self-commiseration, Zaidee's lips trembled. She looked mistily into the eyes of the man before her and smiled wanly.

"All of us have our sorrows, our little tragedies, I suppose," she concluded.

He nodded but still did not speak, eager to hear all that she would say.

"All of us," she repeated, half to herself but in the words lay a question, a subtle invitation to the man to reveal, in turn, more of his own heart.

"All of us, Mrs. Sylvestre," O'Malley assented. "Not even the youngest, unfortunately, can escape their little tragedies. Some are real and some are imaginary and the strange part of it is that no one can tell which bring us the greatest anguish, our real woes or the woes we only imagine."

When Zaidee spoke again it was in lighter mood. If she had entertained any intention of continuing her confessions it was abandoned and she was soon laughing gaily. Claiming the privilege of an invalid she begged him to amuse her and listened delightedly as he told her story after story gleaned from his wide experience.

Lightly, in the course of an anecdote, he touched upon politics and at once she became more alert. It was impossible for her to resist the temptation of learning from her visitor the probability of Holman's success.

"I follow politics very little. I suppose I am not intelligent enough to understand it," she confessed.

"Now, now, Mrs. Sylvestre, my ears refuse to listen," he protested.

"If I were a man, though," her eyes flashed, "I believe nothing would interest me more. It's such a game of wits where the duller are defeated, or, at least, so it seems to me." His smile held nothing of the tolerance of superior manhood for a woman's views of politics and, taking this as a sign to proceed, Zaidee went straight at her subject. "I have read a great deal in the papers lately about the presidential outlook. I see there is much talk of Mr. David Holman." In O'Malley's frown she found further encouragement and asked boldly: "Do you think he will be president?"

Mirth died away from O'Malley's face. "Sometimes I fear so," he answered.

"Fear?" she waited breathlessly for his explanation.

"Yes, I had not intended to use that word but I do fear it, perhaps because I do not entirely trust him. You spoke a moment ago of politics as a game of wits. That is the worst phase of politics, Mrs. Sylvestre, and David Holman is one of the shrewd wits that play that part of the game successfully; more successfully than any one else, perhaps, or, at least, it begins to appear so. A few weeks ago and he was scarcely thought of in connection with the presidency. Now suddenly he looms up as the most talked-of candidate and it begins to be seen that he has been secretly working for months, perhaps years, to that end; working in the dark, not out in the open day as we like to see men work. Such men play the game for themselves. But politics is a higher thing than that, or, rather, it should be. Politics is a

game, if you will, but it should be a game played for the greatest good of the greatest number. Unfortunately——” He paused.

“Unfortunately,” she prompted.

“Unfortunately, the wits who play politics, play with the People and not for them. But this is all much too serious for an invalid. Politics, though, can be gay enough——”

As he spoke Zaidee heard the door below open and voices in the hall. It was Holman returning with Captain.

Zaidee could not believe her senses. She half rose and sat, her staring eyes betraying her stupefaction. She had expected to see Mr. O'Malley only for a moment to thank him for his thoughtfulness. Surely, the afternoon had not sped so quickly; the jaded hours had always been so long before. She could not believe it possible that it was time for Holman to return. There must be some trick about it; some freak of her imagination; a delusion. But she could hear Holman's voice resonant and deep, drowning the thin treble of the boy. Their voices grew nearer, Holman was coming directly to her room. She was in a panic of fright. Her one thought was that the two men must not meet; that Holman must not see Mr. O'Malley there in her bed-chamber.

O'Malley had stopped mid-way in a sentence, astonished by the change in Mrs. Sylvestre's demeanor. He did not attempt to conclude what he was saying; it was plain that she was deaf to his words. The man's voice on the stairs came trumpeting up to him like a challenge. In the dark eyes of the woman on the couch, as fixed as a compass on the door, reflecting a flame like the flame of cut-jet; in her clenched hands; in her blanched face, he read a danger to himself. Instinctively he rose and faced the door. He heard a low moan from the woman as before them, with the laughing child in his arms, stood David Holman.

O'Malley recognized him, in spite of the wraps, instantly. It flashed over him then why Mrs. Sylvestre's face had seemed familiar. He had seen her with Holman. One night as they were leaving a theatre. She had swept so close to him that he had seen the jewels on her hands, the ruby and the Mazarin rose diamond, and in the air as she passed there had been a perfume as of a distant orange grove in bloom. So, she was the woman they called David Holman's Spanish beauty, but even now, in the excitement of the moment, with his heart beating fast he felt for her a profound pity and for the man facing him a deep and angry contempt.

Holman, cool always in crises, regarded O'Malley. Emotion had been chiselled from his face. He put the boy to the floor with gentle care and advanced toward the District Attorney. He looked at O'Malley with wondering recognition but when he spoke it was as if there were a possibility of a mistake.

"Mr. O'Malley, I believe," he began, an interrogation in his inflection; "To what am I indebted for this pleasant surprise?" His voice was as cold and as even as a frozen lake.

Holman had not once looked at Zaidee. It was as if he wished to ignore her presence, blotting out from consideration her part in the affair, leaving it a matter to be settled between the two men. But the sound of his voice addressing Mr. O'Malley broke the spell that had held her silent and it was she who answered Holman's question.

"Mr. O'Malley is the gentleman who saved me from being badly hurt by Gila in the park and it was he who brought me home. He has called to inquire how I was progressing. He has been most kind and I am very grateful to him." The words overran themselves in her anxiety to explain quickly.

Holman was still looking steadily at O'Malley. His eyes had not left the District Attorney's face. "Is this

the first time Mr. O'Malley has called?" he asked.

"Yes." Again it was Zaidee who answered. O'Malley, however, refused to abide by the subterfuge.

"This is the first time Mrs. Sylvestre has accorded me the honor of seeing me," he said in a tone that held something of defiance. "I have called here before to make inquiries and to bring Mrs. Sylvestre flowers on several occasions since she was hurt."

Zaidee, familiar with the methods of the mining camp, expected a physical clash between the two men. She had heard wild stories of Holman's terrible anger when crossed; she had known of his crushing with his hands two threatening miners.

"That was kind but unnecessary," Holman answered, an insult in his sneer.

"Mr. O'Malley," Zaidee breathlessly interposed, "was the means of saving my life. If it had not been for him I believe Gila would have killed me. This is the first opportunity I have had to express my gratitude. I feel sure that you, too, will wish to thank Mr. O'Malley for his timely aid." With the feline adroitness of a woman at bay she had saved the situation. Holman bowed. Action on his part other than acquiescence would have been tantamount to a confession of suspicion. He realized that, in order not to demean himself in the eyes of the District Attorney, he must follow Zaidee's lead. Resourceful, quick to turn defeat into victory, disadvantage into advantage, he wondered if here might not be the opportunity to win O'Malley's friendship to a degree that would make probable his political support.

"I hope Mr. O'Malley will allow me to add my thanks to yours," Holman said. Although he addressed Zaidee he still did not look at her. "We should both be very grateful. It was a gallant thing for him to do but then Mr. O'Malley is noted for his gallantry." He paused for the phrase to impress itself upon Zaidee, aware that, to her, gallantry would be associated only with women.

Then, addressing O'Malley directly, he added, "I see you are leaving. I myself dropped in only for a moment after a drive in the park. My car is at the door. I hope you will allow me to put you down anywhere you wish to go."

"Thank you but I have a cab waiting outside."

"Then dismiss it and ride with me." O'Malley was about to decline, but Holman reinforced his request with, "There are some things I have been intending to consult you about and this will be a good opportunity."

"I must go down to my office and it's late," O'Malley objected.

"Good!" Holman accepted the arrangement as if made.

"I, too, was on my way downtown."

Captain, abashed before a stranger, had found a hiding place on the farther side of the bed. Mr. O'Malley saw the wistful face looking at him curiously. He took Zaidee's wearily lifted hand and, as he observed her pallor, the wave of compassion swept over him again.

"I hope you will soon be able to ride in the park again. These are ideal days; it is a pity that you must miss them." Was there a suggestion of another meeting in his solicitude? She looked up at him with eyes that conveyed her gratitude, and slowly nodded her head but did not speak.

The two men left the room together. Holman gave neither look nor word of farewell to Captain or to Zaidee. From the time he entered the room and found O'Malley there until he quitted it in O'Malley's company, he had not once apparently regarded the woman lying frightened and helpless among the cushions of the divan.

CHAPTER XVII

MR. HOLMAN OBTAINS PLEASING INFORMATION

"You wish to consult me?" O'Malley asked when the automobile had started on its way down the Avenue. He was still resentful, partly because of Holman's recent manner but, in greater part, because of his discovery that Mrs. Sylvestre was Holman's friend, nor could he tell why the discovery should have caused him such grievous disappointment. It was there in his heart, though, a sense of loss, irreparable and heavy, for which he held Holman responsible. All the ugly rumors he had heard came running back to him; old insinuations, slurs and accusations which, at the time he heard them, had meant nothing to him, and which he supposed had long since passed from his memory were revived and stood again before him clearly, like devils dancing in an inferno, their foul hands stretching out greedily to stain the pathetic figure of the girl who had come so suddenly to occupy a large and honorable place in his thoughts. Rumor was not proof, he knew, and he knew, too, that, if there had been wrong, it was the man and not the woman who should bear the burden of blame. He wished to be rid of his unpleasant conjectures and had not waited for Holman to speak before he asked the question to bring Holman quickly to his business.

"Yes," answered Holman his eyes fixed straight ahead, not shifting the direction of their gaze even when vehicles passed the car narrowly, his face dark and hard, "I wished to urge upon you again the place of which I spoke, but first permit me to apologize if in my surprise at seeing you at Mrs. Sylvestre's my manner was abrupt or curt."

"There is no need to apologize," O'Malley responded

and he, too, held his glance straight before him, the furrow of a frown between his eyes. "I was able to render Mrs. Sylvestre a service and she wished to express her gratitude."

If Holman did not like O'Malley's staunch tone his disapproval found no expression in his face. He was done with Zaidee he told himself but he was unwilling that she should see O'Malley and, perhaps, place damaging facts in the possession of one who might be a dangerous opponent.

"Mrs. Sylvestre," Holman continued as if unwilling to accept O'Malley's waiver of the necessity of explanation, "is or, rather, was my ward and I am now the trustee of property I have given her out of gratitude to her father who helped me with one of my mines when I was getting my start in the West. He and her mother died when she was a baby and I adopted her. They were a bad lot, particularly the mother, and I regret to say the girl seems to have inherited some of her mother's waywardness. I have tried to educate her but she has given me no little trouble. She ran away from school in France with a Frenchman named Sylvestre and they were married. The boy you saw at the house is their child. The husband was a worthless loafer, a musician playing in cafés, I believe, and before I could get to Paris he had taken what money he could get from his wife and deserted her. I don't know where he is now but he is said to be somewhere in South America."

He paused. The frown had disappeared from O'Malley's eyes. "That was a hard experience for a young girl," he said. "Terribly hard."

"I sometimes doubt if she has profited by it," Holman answered him. "They have never been divorced as I thought it better my ward should have time in which to weigh her mistake. You can see that her situation, the anomalous position she has placed herself in, should preclude her from receiving other men's attentions. I have

asked her as a matter of propriety not to receive visitors and that was the reason I was so completely surprised when I found you there. But I understand your position in the matter, O'Malley, perfectly," he concluded with a show of friendliness. "It was only the natural and proper thing for you to do, ignorant as you were of the circumstances and now, let's dismiss the subject, for it's not a pleasant one, and get down to business."

He turned to the District Attorney. O'Malley was sorry to have it so lightly done with. He would have preferred it if Holman had attempted criticism of himself for, in spite of the narrative, he still felt that Holman was to no small extent responsible for Mrs. Sylvestre's unhappiness, and, in his present mood, he would have welcomed an opportunity that would justify the expression of such an opinion.

"I am sorry you could not accept my proposal," Holman went on, speaking rapidly, "but I respect the reasons you give. I have been intending to write to you but put it off hoping to see you and wishing to give you time to reconsider your determination."

O'Malley shook his head. "Impossible," was all he said. The unfolding of Holman's campaign had caused him to view the offer from a new angle.

"I had hoped you would find time in connection with my business to devote to your other affairs," O'Malley again shook his head but did not speak and Holman followed up the subject. "Of course if the yearly retainer could be a moving consideration I should, as I told you, gladly pay more than the sum we mentioned. I feel that your services, particularly in the coming year, would be worth double that amount to me."

The District Attorney interrupted him. "No, Mr. Holman, your offer was generous in the first place. The consideration would have been more than adequate but I am determined to enter into no engagements. Just now, I wish my future to shape itself and to be bound by no

ties. I have about determined to retire from politics and public service so you may see that other reasons have influenced me."

It was plain enough. The District Attorney wished no alliance with him, personal or professional and Holman, his eyes darkening, his straight lips pressed against each other, abandoned the subject and presently the talk fell upon politics. Holman discussed his own position with apparent frankness professing astonishment at the widespread demand for him and asserting that, though he would not seek the nomination, he should in no way avoid it if it were the wish of the majority. But the insincerity of his protestations, although justifiable from a politician's view-point, served only to awaken in O'Malley a deeper distrust, for the experience of the District Attorney had told him that Holman had labored hard to obtain present results. With dignity O'Malley reasserted his allegiance to Heyward but he agreed with Holman that the Ohio leader had apparently lost strength in the last few weeks and might fail of a majority in the convention. He did not attempt to disguise the facts as he saw them; he was not of those who seek to frighten the enemy by war-whoops and the beating of tom-toms. It was the first sign of doubt Holman had detected among the leaders of Heyward's forces and he intended to make use of it in his conference with McQuade. He intended, too, that McQuade should devise means to bind the hands of the District Attorney in the convention.

Holman, entering his office after parting from O'Malley, encountered Fernald. He clapped the editorial writer on the shoulder.

"Fernald," he cried, "we have the enemy frightened. And that is a good preliminary to a stampede."

"The enemy?" Fernald's conception of the term was largely non-political.

"Well, let us say our friendly enemy, Mr. Heyward; just now our adversary but, later, we trust, our ally."

The wrinkles in Fernald's face were lost in the rays of pleasure that darted from his eyes. "I have never doubted that the nomination would be yours and your election is no less certain." He spoke with convincing faith.

"Fernald, you're a staunch friend. If my name goes before the convention it will be due to your persuasion."

"No, it is due to something higher than that; it is due to a demand you could not resist."

"But you first voiced the demand, Fernald, and I am not ungrateful. And it must be you when the time comes who will repeat that call to the people through their delegates. You must be the one, Fernald, to make the nominating speech."

The devoted Fernald could have leaped for joy. That one moment before the convention should be an epitome of his life's work. He took Holman's hand.

"There are others much more worthy," was all he said.

"Oh, you are worthy, Fernald," Holman laughed. He was in splendid humor. "I heard you make one speech in the last campaign and, believe me, I could see some of the famous spellbinders grow green with envy. You need have no fears for your oratory, Fernald. It will stand the test." As he took his seat at his desk Holman added more seriously; "You have what most of them lack; you believe in what you say."

"I appreciate the honor." Fernald could not trust himself to voice his full delight.

"It is incommensurate with my gratitude," Holman answered with that little touch of old-world courtesy he occasionally affected.

Fernald left his chief's presence fired by the prospect of nominating him. He would rather make that one speech, he told himself, than write all the editorials in the world, and even as he entered his room, his mind was already busy with the phrases he intended to use. Dimly,

for years, he had foreseen the opportunity that was to be his.

Several days later Holman took from his desk a large envelope containing clippings which he had previously selected from numerous others and turned them over to Fernald.

"Here are some late opinions regarding my candidacy," he remarked. "Will you be good enough to go through them carefully and select the best. Save enough to make a page and we shall run a full page to-morrow with appropriate comment that may furnish food for reflection to our friend Mr. Heyward, and his friend, Mr. O'Malley, as well as the esteemed Mr. McQuade."

While Fernald, shut in his own office, went over these editorial opinions, many of them mere echoes of his own daily sermons, repeating his very words, Holman puzzled long over a code telegram from Mendell.

"——entire state delegation; suggest I return to New York to give details.

"Mendell"

There were two words that were unintelligible. One was "Aspige." The nearest word to such a combination that Holman could discover was "Assuage" which was the code form for "can buy." But, surely, even in code form, Holman argued, Mendell would never be guilty of such an indiscretion as to use that phrase. He studied over the dispatch for half an hour before he gave to Xavier a message for Mendell, bidding him to return to New York at once. He was twenty-four hours away from the city with his work uncompleted but they were at a stage now where telegrams, even in code form, were no longer advisable.

Holman smiled when he put down Mendell's dispatch. Even garbled in transmission it held for him the promise of victory. All the threads seemed at last to be weaving

into the pattern of his ambitions. Mendell was doing his work well and had achieved much. Results were manifest and gratifying to Holman, titillating his self-esteem. Through the mouthpiece of hundreds of newspapers the Voice of the People was making itself heard. It was as if Mendell's deft hand, unseen, had released the springs of innumerable phonographs, which, mute before, now, busily revolving, repeated the name of David Holman. It was difficult, as it always is, to determine to what extent the newspapers were leading or being led by popular opinion. But there was no doubting their purport. As far as the newspapers were concerned, David Holman over-shadowed all other candidates. Even McQuade, made cynical by many campaigns, was astonished to learn how wide-spread was the demand for the editor. Nor did he, acute as he was, realize fully the great force that Holman was exerting or comprehend how that power had been gained.

Holman preached against the Octopus. He had helped to make the word hateful to complaining millions, but, in good truth, he might himself, as he sat at his desk in the *Epoch* office, be compared to the head and brains of a great cuttle-fish whose tentacles stretched from one coast to another and beyond. Holman had built up a remarkable news service. To the larger publications "features" for Sunday editions, comic sections, editorial pages, special articles and illustrations were supplied. But the great coil that wound round "out-of-town" newspapers, linking them to the big, pulsating body in New York, known as the *Epoch*, was the "leased wire" over which were sent from the brain of the Octopus, thousands of words daily, reporting the news of the world, manufactured or real, skeletonized or clothed by imagination.

Newspapers are the wonder of a wonderful age and the *Epoch* was the most marvellous development of modern news-gathering. The continents of Europe and Asia and Africa; far-away Australia; the northernmost

out-post of civilization; the southernmost habitation of man, were all united directly or indirectly to the *Epoch* office by submarine cables, telegraph wires and wireless telegraphy. From remote, inaccessible portions of the South American mountains where revolutions were being born and where modern means of communication were unknown, sure-footed burros carried through mountain-passes correspondents' stories of the overthrow of governments, the hastily written accounts finding their way to the *Epoch* office in advance of other information. From the heart of the African desert camels bore to the world outside tidings of men kidnapped by brigands, their thrilling adventures told for *Epoch* readers. From the Chinese interior coolie runners, plunging through rice-fields, fording rivers, brought to the *Epoch* news of an uprising against foreigners. From the Far North came the first message of those who bravely sought the Pole; scribbled words of history borne by dogs and faithful Esquimaux to the remote end of that electric antenna which reached out from the maw of the Octopus waiting to receive it. And in the slow days and nights when these distant words were crawling, like bugs, over the frozen seas or through fever swamps of the jungle, men in the more comfortable seats of civilization, in the nearer foreign capitals, and in the large and small cities of America, were working at white-heat, grinding out myriads of words telling of the way of the world, the food of the insatiate giant cuttle-fish in New York which waited impatiently to digest them. Forth again, through other and manifold antennæ, this digested news was sent by the Octopus to every city in the land and to towns in every state. Eagerly the waiting ones attached themselves to the long arms that brought food, without a suspicion of the danger that some day the coils might tighten.

The head, the brains of this Giant Squid, directing its every movement, decreeing what it received, and what

it should give and to whom, was David Holman. Even in the early days when his aims were hidden deep in the secret chamber of his mind, he had perceived the tremendous power he could wield as the master of such a creature. His hands now rested on the hands of hundreds of editorial writers, directing their every move. He had shaped the thing carefully to his purpose. This food that the Octopus gave out was of vital necessity to many young and struggling newspapers and was as salt in the veins of ancient, moribund sheets that still compelled the deference due to age, and, so, were valuable in forming public opinion. And the Octopus took its toll from those it touched. But it was not a menacing Octopus. If payment were difficult there were always mortgages and promissory notes acceptable to the Head in New York. It was the gentle Octopus, a real Octopus, not the monster of fiction, and those fastened so securely to the antennæ who felt the touch of those long arms were all the more ready to do the bidding of the Head.

And now the day had arrived for Holman to test the value of the thing he had created. He had given so much; at last it was for him to ask. It was the day when the devil-fish he had trained to service was to receive word to close in upon the pliant victims; to wind its wire coils more closely about them and to bring them back as sacrifices to the master. Gradually it was being done. There had been no commotion; no display of force to frighten. The pressure had been applied so slowly that it had been almost imperceptible. Holman, feeling the giant thing bend to his touch, thrilled with the sense of unlimited power. It was a tribute to his genius of organization; the cry of "Success!" from a million throats!

CHAPTER XVIII

HARD WORK AND HIGH HOPES

"I am sure you will not object to yielding your room temporarily to Mr. Mendell, my dear Fernald. As the convention draws nearer I am overwhelmed with routine matters that he knows so well how to dispose of and I would like to have him at my elbow." Holman asked the favor on the day Mendell returned from his mysterious six-weeks' mission to remain permanently in New York, assuming direction of the clerical work involved in Holman's campaign.

Object! Fernald would have yielded his hat or his coat or any other thing that was his, if Holman had made the request. And, therefore, Mendell, pompous and oily, was exalted. With typewriters and assistants he was installed in Fernald's old room. He bore upon him the stamp of Holman's approval. He carried with him into the city-room his annoying assertion of superiority but Riefsnider quietly extinguished the long smouldering embers of his animosity and worked shoulder to shoulder with Mendell, in the furtherance of Holman's candidacy. The new city editor was carrying out his resolve to "ride with the band-wagon."

There was no longer any concealment of Holman's intentions. He had made no recent formal announcement, but words were not needed to convince even the most uninterested that he was now heart and soul in the fight for the nomination. His exhaustless personal energy and all the resources of his important chain of newspapers were bent toward gaining for him a coveted place.

"The *Epoch's* no longer a newspaper; it's a Presidential *War Cry*" growled one veteran space-writer.

"Right you are," another echoed. "It's not journalism but politics. We are no longer reporters but messenger boys."

Such was the spirit existing in the *Epoch* office where men were working furiously night and day. There were many to complain but Riefsnider silenced them with the alternative of working together for Holman's interests or leaving Holman's employ and to the faithful he held out the hope of future prosperity when the ballots were counted in November.

Members of the *Epoch* staff from Xavier to the managing editor were over-worked. They labored late and early. Men who had gone thirty-six hours on a stretch without sleep in the interests of the paper now pleaded guilty to being overtaxed and demanded some relief. If it were so now, nearly a month before the convention, they asked, what would it be when the delegates assembled?

But the men, hard-worked though they were, could not assert that they labored longer or harder than their Chief. As the convention grew nearer David Holman exhibited more markedly than ever that capacity for work to which he attributed much of what he had achieved. Persistent, steady and forceful he hammered away as relentlessly as a pile-driver. Late at night, when the men who called him a hard task-master had been long asleep, and early in the morning, before they had risen from comfortable beds, Holman was at work. The uplifting excitement as he saw uncertainty developing into certainty buoyed him like a stimulant. It was as if he, who never used tobacco or liquor, found in his work an excitement equal to that produced by nicotine or alcohol. At times, absorbed in watching the growth and fruition of seeds planted in places known only to himself, he felt it might be possible to do without sleep altogether.

Nor was Mendell far behind in his devotion to duty. He cared for the vast amount of routine with a zeal and

expedition that lifted burdens from the shoulders of his Chief. His personal missions became rare and, except when he slept and ate, he was at the office. From Fernald's old room came the constant click of typewriter keys and, occasionally, the voice of Mendell, suave and unctuous, dictating letters to stenographers. He had become the practical director of Holman's campaign. In his fat hands he held the thousand and one little things that one must look after lest the bigger things go wrong.

Fernald, relegated to a partitioned corner in the managing editor's room, worked on, uninfluenced by his cramped quarters. His attention concentrated upon the thing before him with all the singleness of purpose of a scientist, he wrote, heedless of the hum and stir in the outer office.

"Fernald could dream standing up and write editorials while hanging to a window ledge," was the way Rief-snider described it.

Sentences that he wrote in the little temporary room, scarcely large enough for his desk and chair, etched themselves deep upon the minds of the public.

Though the disease be grave, the remedy is simple. Common honesty in business and politics will rid the country, in one administration, of the abuses from which we now suffer.

We have been accused of exciting class against class. We humbly hope we have been successful. But let it be remembered that those we would destroy first preyed upon their defenceless fellow-citizens.

Maypoles, hung with the garlands of ill-gotten wealth, must no longer pose as Pillars of the Community.

The Corporation that forces competitors out of business by unfair methods places itself beyond the pale of the Law and deserves no more consideration than the bandit on whose head a price has been set.

These and other phrases from Fernald's pen were to be heard on every side. Working-men paid out his words to each other like coin. They became as much a part of daily conversation as the latest slang and were reiterated as often as a popular song.

Fernald, high on the mountain of hopes fulfilled, saw the Promised Land, stretching cool and green in the pure sunshine. It would have needed more than physical discomfort to cloud his vision when such a prospect invited. He was no longer the old Fernald, stoop-shouldered and worn. He stood erect, his step was elastic, his head high, his jaws square. It was as if the garment of the Old World with which he had seemed to be clothed ever since his student days in foreign lands, had dropped from him and in its place, he had put on the mantle of the New World with its sterner folds, its closer, more durable weave, its more flaming pattern. Occasionally, as he bent to his task in his partitioned office, he was heard to whistle and Fernald had never been known to whistle before. To no one was the tune familiar; the managing editor and Riefsnider who stopped to listen agreed that it had never been heard on Broadway. They called in the musical critic. He said that it might be Offenbach but he could not be sure unless he heard it sung; for wary critics will cling to their saving clause. Fernald did not enlighten them. He spoke rarely. For those he saw in passing he had a friendly nod and a radiant smile, but it was not often that he saw any one for he went about his work with eyes fixed on the future.

CHAPTER XIX

A TRIBUTE

With widely differing emotions Zaidee Sylvestre and Harriet Stowers read in the papers all they could find relating to David Holman's candidacy. For them his name and the daily progress of his campaign eclipsed all other news. To Zaidee the eulogistic comments confidently predicting success were as a valedictory to her girlhood's romance; she read in them a farewell to days that had been happy and unclouded by any anticipation of her present situation. To Harriet Stowers these laudatory words were a just recognition of Holman's greatness and, sure in her heart of his eventual victory, she foresaw his opportunity for the exercise of power, such an opportunity as is given to few.

Holman had not seen or communicated with Zaidee since he had met Mr. O'Malley at her house. He was willing she should consider that she had offended him seriously by receiving the District Attorney and, as the days went by, he preserved a silence that she could not misinterpret. But, as if the more irrevocably to sever his relations with Zaidee, rarely an afternoon passed when Holman did not call on Harriet Stowers. Their friendship had ripened quickly. Harriet could no longer be content with passive approval of his work. Into her willing ear Holman had poured his arguments, fitting the doctrine of his socialism to her deep sympathy for poverty and affliction and, in conversation with the men who valued her friendship, she repeated these arguments to win supporters for Holman and his creed. Had she been of those to whom a wise constitution reserves the franchise, she would have enlisted under Holman's

banner. Even handicapped as she was she helped to spread his gospel, her heart finding joy in the work. Her nobility of character, the lofty, unselfish wish to help upward those beneath her was finding its opportunity and Holman had deftly fed the fires of her imagination with suggestions of the greater good yet to be done.

One afternoon as she and Holman sat in the comfortable library of her home she laughingly told him of her efforts at proselyting.

"But the seed fell among thorns," she confessed, "and like those in the parable were 'choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life'."

He smiled at her feigned distress. "Then we must leave them to their fate," he answered. "Some day we shall have that sweetest of revenge, the ability to say 'I told you so'."

"Yes, we can at least mock them," she laughed.

"They will heed the warning some day," he told her, "and we can hope it will not be too late. I remember when I was a boy hearing a famous temperance lecturer, it may have been John B. Gough—that was before you were even the littlest of girls—who described some men drifting heedlessly on the Niagara river. To the warnings from the bank that the falls and the rapids were below them, the men in the boat shouted derisive answers. I remember the orator's voice calling: 'Young men, young men, the rapids are below you!' 'Ha!' answered the men in the boat, 'another fool told us that a mile back!' And so they did not heed until too late. It is like that with many of our friends. To our words of warning they answer only: 'Another fool told us that a mile back!'"

"Mr. Holman," she urged, "I wish you would meet some of my friends. I am sure they would listen to you." She could not guess that he had built upon friendship with her friends as a steadying brace to the pinnacle he had set out to climb.

"'A burnt child dreads the fire,' is a true saying," he

remarked drily. "But, candidly, I should be pleased to meet your friends after the convention. Until then my time is not my own. My hour or two of recreation a day I spend here with you." The frankness of his avowals never failed to surprise her. Their unexpectedness startled her pleasantly. She was delighted by his confession that he turned from his work to her, and the faintest ripple of pink went running over her temples.

"I hope you will come as often as you can," she assured him. "I had expected to go to Tuxedo nearly a fortnight ago and, indeed, I am putting off my departure only from day to day. Mrs. Kirkland writes me by nearly every post wondering why I linger in town. Many of my friends believe that I am already in Tuxedo, so that you are apt to find me alone any afternoon for the 'feeve o'clock'." She pronounced it in the way the adopted phrase is pronounced on the continent; it had been a jest between them: one of those meaningless little jests that cement new friendships.

"I shall avail myself of the invitation," he said. "It has been very kind of you to see me so often but, in truth, I was beginning to condemn myself for taking up so much of your time. But now that I am sure I am not crowding out other and older friends——"

It was true that certain of Harriet's friends had been less persistent in their attentions since the beginning of what they were coming to look upon as her infatuation for David Holman, but she would not allow him to conclude.

"Many of my former friends or those I thought were my friends, Mr. Holman, I regret to say, do not prove very interesting." He fed upon the implied compliment but did not interrupt her by an acknowledgment. "They ridicule my theories without being able to refute them. They love to talk of their work as if it were something worth talking of. But, despite the fact that some go mad from their devotion to business, they are what you have

called them; drones in the hive. They do not know what it means to work for others or to consider any one except themselves."

"Nor do they understand that, in working for others, one reaps a higher satisfaction for himself," Holman ventured, speaking without emotion as one who rehearses platitudes, but another note was in his voice as he added: "I have wished often to thank you for the encouragement you have been to me." She looked up, surprised again and unable to subdue the little tremor of excitement that ran over her. She would have spoken but she could not.

"These visits here have meant much to me," Holman went on. "They have brought something new into my life, something that was lacking before." He bent toward her looking earnestly into the eyes she tried bravely to hold up to his own but which, in spite of her, fell in the trepidation that had unaccountably seized her. "All my life I have been alone; whatever I have achieved has been done without aid or encouragement from any one. I have never before been able to talk to any one of my wishes or plans. Our conversations here and your interest in what I am trying to do have been to me an inspiring help. I can not make you realize how often in my life, Miss Stowers, I have felt the need of such aid as you have given."

Harriet, with the strange feeling that the man speaking to her could not be put aside and that she would be unable to escape if he led on to a declaration of his love, could not determine whether she wished him then to lay siege to her heart or not. She could not speak. She was exultantly happy but a vague alarm filled her.

"I am very grateful," Holman continued. "I have thought Miss Stowers, no, I'll confess, I have almost wished that in receiving me here you were making some sacrifice, perhaps abandoning some unappreciative

friends. I say I have wished it for I have gained so much that it would seem wrong if there should not be loss somewhere. And I should have been happier than I have ever been to know that you considered me worth even a slight sacrifice."

Harriet's heart leaped to hear him acknowledge that she had helped him. The rose raced back and forth over her temples and the hand she rested on the table trembled beyond control. She turned away her head to hide her emotion, unable to meet his questioning glance. In Holman's eyes there was a new and tender light but, misinterpreting her action, he drew back as she turned from him and was dissuaded from his immediate purpose although not discouraged. He postponed the testing of her love until another time.

"I offer you, in return, my deepest gratitude," he said, his voice low and unsteady. "You have shown me that you are interested in what I am doing; it may then be some small payment to know that you have aided me in my present work more than I can ever make you understand. Without you I believe it would not have been possible."

When Holman had left the house Miss Stowers remained long where he had left her, recalling his words. The remembrance of them was sweeter even than the actuality for she no longer trembled; alarm had departed from her heart and, with eyes dimmed by the dew that joy will bring, she looked about the familiar cherished room wondering if the time were near at hand when she should part with it and all that her pleasant home had been to her to take up her woman's work in a wider sphere. She might have felt as she felt now had the call come to her to labor in the Master's service in far-off mission fields, among strange peoples. Indeed, once when she was much younger she had contemplated the devotion of herself to such work and she recalled the exaltation her spirit had then experienced as akin to the

emotion she now felt. That had been a young girl's dream, abandoned, though unwillingly, when those she loved opposed; now she was not alone but with a man's staunch heart to trust to, his strong arm to protect her, his wise counsel to guide her.

CHAPTER XX

IN WHICH AN HONEST OFFER OF FRIENDSHIP IS MADE AND ACCEPTED

When Miss Stowers had proposed to Holman that he meet some of her friends she had small idea that she was voicing his cherished wish, his qualified objection on the ground of a pressure of business confirming her opinion that he held acquaintance with other men of wealth as of slight value and when, a few days later, she presented him to one of the most prominent of these so-called "captains of industry," a friend of her father, she did not suspect that the introduction was not all of her own devising, so adroitly had Holman accomplished his purpose. The man was one who, more than congress or state legislatures, governed the country's finance and was typical of his associates, owning politicians as he owned railroads and using the one as he used the other for his private gain, caring little if the public were cheated and suffered through his enrichment. Holman contrived other meetings with this man of business and dickered with him on business terms. He showed himself more tolerant and tractable than even the supinely honest Heyward and he and the captain of industry drove their bargain without great difficulty; without friendship as without patriotism, each gaining the thing he desired most.

To Holman the alliance meant much for the man's influence extended further and deeper than McQuade's and would be another argument to use when the time came to argue with the Boss. That McQuade would be amenable to reason there was no longer doubt and

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his support together with that of the newly-made ally insured an almost certain victory for Holman.

Confident of the future only one small cloud appeared on Holman's horizon. He had freed himself from Zaidee Sylvestre without compunction, experiencing relief instead of regret, glad to forget her forever in the more enthralling sentiment inspired by Harriet Stowers, but the memory of little Captain was not so easily effaced. Nor would he have put aside thoughts of the child had he been able, for the boy was dearer to him than any other human being had ever been. Whenever he closed his eyes for those mental reviews of the events of important days—and every day now was eventful—the wistful face of little Captain would present itself, affectionate and appealing, and again before sleep came the boy occupied his last waking thoughts. Holman had no intention of parting with the child. When the time came he would take him from Zaidee by force or agreement, by trickery or purchase. He could do with Zaidee as he pleased, forcing her to his will. He had proved that much in the past and the present situation convinced him of it even more strongly.

Mrs. Sylvestre supported her desertion with an equanimity that came to Holman as a surprise not altogether flattering but agreeable. To his silence she opposed silence. Holman had expected an outburst of indignation and was prepared to be the center of a wild storm of reproach. He would not have been averse to such a demonstration as the final scene rounding out their little drama, but it now seemed likely that their separation was not to be climacteric, as he had imagined it would be from the time he had first regarded an eventual rupture as inevitable. Zaidee's development, under his care into womanhood, her dependence upon him and the unreserve of her affection had lighted in Holman's heart a flame that may, at the first, have approached the brilliancy of love but, even in its pristine state, the rays had

never blinded him to her faults. Once he had regarded these faults as virtues but, now that he wished to be rid of her, the most attractive of her virtues became as faults in his eyes. Her impetuosity, at first amusing and even attractive, had long ago become distasteful to him.

Zaidee in these darker hours, however, was beginning to learn the lesson of self-control that Holman had vainly endeavored to teach. She, the creature of impulse, was calling philosophy to her aid in the struggle of giving up a life-long ideal. In her childhood days in Arizona she had worshipped to the point of idolatry the strong, handsome young partner of her father who, in a community of fearless men, stood out preëminently for his dauntless courage. As she grew older, she came to regard him with something of that unreciprocated devotion the Swiss mountaineer cherishes for his snow-mantled Alps, giving all gladly, demanding little in return—a love that finds fulfilment in itself. For a time it was as if her cold and lofty mountain had caught the red glow of the sun—the Alpengluen—and had become warm and tender and human. Alas! she had seen the after-glow disappear and the tall peak turn into ice again, but so slowly was the transformation wrought that her accustomed eyes learned not to weep at the change.

When Holman had found O'Malley in her presence, Zaidee had expected that the mountain would at last depart from its accustomed calm and like some long extinct volcano, suddenly bursting into fire, spread destruction, but, even then, Holman had remained as cold and bleak as the Matterhorn. And, since then, feminine curiosity had gnawed at her heart. She wondered what had passed between the two men. Had Holman, away from her flamed into temper? Mr. O'Malley had not called at the house since the day he had met Holman there. Had anything been said that made him suppose he was unwelcome? Or had his own quick perception, unaided, denied him the right to visit her? Did he know her history?

Had he heard of her? Zaidee's mind swam round and round the whirlpool of such reflections trying in vain to escape.

As soon as she was able, sooner, indeed, than was wise or prudent, Zaidee determined to resume her morning rides in the park. She limped painfully to the street one morning about a fortnight after Mr. O'Malley's last call and was helped to the saddle of the waiting Gila. As a sudden weakness went over her she had the intention of bidding the groom ride with her but the weakness soon passed under the influence of the fresh, invigorating air and she rode away alone. A spirit of adventure animated her and she wished no one to share her first gallop with Gila after her long imprisonment. Zaidee was not afraid of the mare, attributing past misconduct to her own inadvertence and, as she entered the park, she gave the rein to Gila, who, glad to escape from exercise in the tanbark ring, stretched herself above the unturfed path.

Zaidee kept her eyes fixed as far ahead as she could see. Not even to herself would she have admitted that her gaze sought someone and when, at a turn, the familiar figure of Emmet O'Malley, riding his black thoroughbred, came into view, she followed an impulse, born of this reluctance to admit her secret desire, and, urging Gila forward, rode by the District Attorney at full gallop. She had intended not to look at him as she passed but her intentions were never adamant and this one did not even harden into a resolve. As she sped by O'Malley, Zaidee smiled a greeting to him, and O'Malley urging his horse forward was soon at her side. The exercise had brought the color into her olive cheeks and as the horses resumed their slower speed, she threw back her head drinking deeply of the warm brilliant sunshine so welcome after her long imprisonment.

"You see I am continuing the pursuit," O'Malley greeted her, smiling, with no trace of restraint.

"It's gorgeous to be out again," she replied. "I felt as if I wanted to race away from the world."

His eyes twinkled with amusement. "You will find it difficult with so many park policemen near."

As he spoke two men in uniform rode up. On their faces was that professional anger of the policeman who sees a speed ordinance broken, but their demeanor changed when they recognized the District Attorney.

"It's all right," he assured them. "The lady's horse has not been out of the stable for some time and took a notion to run."

The men rode off. "A narrow escape," O'Malley laughed when they had departed. "You may see what a very little distance you could go in your race away from the world."

They walked their horses together along the narrow path, O'Malley laughing and talking, Zaidee content to listen and smile in response to his good-humor which seemed a part of the freshness and fragrance and shimmer of the day. She was thankful that he made no reference to Holman and O'Malley was more than willing that their conversation should be kept clear of personalities. He had been deeply impressed with the young woman and his interest in her life and sympathy for her suffering were no less keen than they had been but he considered now that he had no right to press his friendship and it was foreign to the considerate chivalry of his nature to pry into her secrets. Zaidee apprehended in some occult way the motives for his reticence and admired O'Malley all the more deeply for them. She delighted in his buoyant friendliness; his sureness of himself as he made her understand that he was her friend. She contrasted her companion with Holman, as strong as O'Malley; perhaps, indeed less easily swerved, but austere, inconsiderate, untrue. We can not escape comparisons; life is made up of them. They force themselves upon our notice even when they seem unworthy

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and disloyal and mold our secret opinions, often when we stubbornly try to hide the contrast we would rather not have seen. We establish criterions unconsciously, regarding all things relatively, changing our standards reluctantly with our changing circumstances. Zaidee, accepting Holman's desertion with philosophic resignation, was far from forgiving the blow to her vanity or the sorrow it had cost her to relinquish at last her girlhood dream and she found a savage joy in the comparison O'Malley suggested. Here was such a man as she had believed David Holman to be, such as he might have been.

O'Malley's sprightly humor flowed on as Zaidee gave herself over to the ideas her contrast of the two men inspired but, at last, unable longer to conceal some of her black thoughts, she let their shadow fall on his talk.

"Mr. O'Malley" she began, "you have been very kind to me at a time when kindness was much needed. The last time we met my thanks seemed insufficient—not the half or the tenth of what I wished to say. I am glad we have met again today. I wished to see you to tell you again how much I have appreciated your thoughtfulness. Nothing, I believe, has ever seemed to me more beautiful than the flowers you sent me when I was helpless and in pain."

"Oh, always the flowers," he answered lightly. "Flowers make us all grateful; grateful we are alive; grateful that the sun shines; grateful that there is a God who loves us well enough to give us flowers. The easiest way a poor devil of a mortal may earn gratitude is to offer flowers to those he wishes to please."

He was still desirous of avoiding subjects that, to discuss, might only add to her unhappiness, but Zaidee would not let him put the matter aside so lightly. "It was not the flowers alone, Mr. O'Malley. Lovely as they are, flowers are not as pleasing to us as the kindness that offers them. Isn't it so? The weed gathered by a child

and laid upon your table can be dearer and lovelier than the rarest and most delicate of blossoms. Your wish to bring me comfort in my suffering, your intuition that I was lonely, made the flowers more welcome than they could possibly have been alone."

"Ah, that's what the flowers told you; trust them to ——" He looked up and was surprised to see that her lips trembled and that tears stood in her eyes. A flash of hatred of Holman, white-hot and searing, shot through him. He knew blindly that Holman was responsible for those tears. Pity for the woman and a fierce resentment against the man who had caused her suffering burned as twin fires in his breast.

"I have been wretchedly unhappy," Zaïdee confided. "It seems so good to have some one care enough to send me flowers. I looked forward to the time of their arrival. It was the only cheerful hour of long black days and what the French call 'white nights'."

O'Malley did not trust himself to speak. They were at the park entrance and instinctively had halted their horses. Zaïdee knew that, failing to invite him to call, she should at least offer an explanation but the words could not be uttered. She was torn and bruised and heart-sick but she was not yet ready for confession.

"Goodbye," She spoke the word suddenly and held out her gloved hand. Mr. O'Malley took it in his own.

"Mrs. Sylvestre," he said, "I think I have seen from the first that you were not happy. At least I fancied that the world, which is rough with women, was, somehow, behaving badly toward you. I have no wish to inquire into the causes of your unhappiness except in so far as I may be able to offer any service that could relieve them. I want you to know this—something tells me you know it already—if there is anything I can do, whatever it may be, you will find me ready and willing." He saw the large tears falling slowly from her long lashes and tried to put sprightliness into his voice.

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"Some women when the world goes badly need doctors; others need lawyers and still others need only friends. I am not a physician, Mrs. Sylvestre, but I hope you will let me say that I am your friend and to remind you ——" a twinkle leaped back again into his eyes——
"that I am also a lawyer. That's hardly professional, is it?"

She tried bravely to smile with him. "I shall remember," she said. "Goodbye."

"Goodbye, Mrs. Sylvestre. Try not to be unhappy." He raised his hat and touching his horse lightly on the neck went cantering down the avenue.

CHAPTER XXI

MISS STOWERS ACCEPTS A DARE

The second week in May brought oppressive weather. Spring gave way to Summer with that unconditional surrender which, though repeated annually, never fails to surprise. Many persons hastened their departure from the city, preferring to risk in the mountains or at the seashore a return to chill and rain rather than endure the discomfort of their urban homes.

Among those refusing to take flight, braving every torment the weather might devise, were Harriet Stowers, her father and her aunts, Mrs. Van Alstyne and Mrs. Kirkland, and the magnet that held them all to their uncomfortable places was David Holman, although he was unconscious, in large part, of the power he was exercising. Harriet had become so absorbed in the progress of Holman's campaign that she was postponing the inevitable departure to Tuxedo as long as possible, inventing excuses to Mrs. Kirkland for her dilatoriness and, with more difficulty, advancing arguments and reasons with which to silence the grumbling complaints of her obedient parent. Mr. Stowers fumed at home, fretted in his office and swore a little in his deserted club but, in the end, after the habit of years, yielded to his daughter's wishes. Mrs. Van Alstyne, with her face more grimly set than ever, remained resolutely to keep watch over her niece of whose perilous preference for the arch-enemy of herself and her kind she had observed more than one instance. She would, however, have been unwilling to believe what she was pleased to call the worst, had not Austin Pemberton repeatedly warned her of the progress of Holman's attentions. Mrs. Van Alstyne was not one

to court self-immolation but she determined to sacrifice herself in performing her duty to her niece, a duty not altogether unpleasant if, in the performance, she could defeat Holman. By sheer force she had drafted Mrs. Kirkland into her small army of defence, causing that unwilling lady to return from Tuxedo by assurances that Harriet's persistence in remaining in the city was something more serious than a mere whim.

This opposition, of which Holman was vaguely aware, accrued to his benefit, a policy of patience serving, as it so often serves in matters of affection, to render ineffective a policy of coercion. Mrs. Van Alstyne had betrayed her annoyance more than once to Harriet but her acrid opposition had never served better purpose than to increase the sympathy Harriet had felt for Holman ever since the day at Deep Glen. His humiliation and loneliness then had awakened in her a compassion that had well served as the foundation of a stronger sentiment, for, when sympathy is linked with admiration, a woman's heart is nearly won. She constantly pictured Holman, when planning his battles or when fighting in the open, as alone and unaided. She thought of him as persecuted by men devoid of gratitude, the very men, often, for whom he labored, her fond imagination adorning him with that crown of martyrdom which for nearly all women and for many men holds an irresistible attraction. Napoleon on the deck of the *Bellerophon*, looking for the last time upon France, had not been to her eyes, more lonely.

Holman was delighted and flattered that Harriet remained in the city. He doubted, however, if she could long withstand the present weather and, calling at her home on the hottest afternoon of the early Summer, was oppressed by the thought that she might have departed unexpectedly. He heard with relief the man's assurance that Harriet was at home.

The room where he found her was darkened and,

coming from the bright light of the street, he did not see her clearly as she rose and came to greet him. He made a pretence of groping and his hands fell lightly on her arms, cool and soft under the sheer linen of her gown. Holman held her in that gentle embrace for seconds that were as minutes to them both. Harriet felt a fever race over her at his touch and it seemed to her that his hands trembled, not from weakness, but from the strength of his emotion as strong hands tremble when they complete the circuit of an electric current.

"How glad I am to be here and to find you!" he laughed, low and confidently, as he released her.

They sat there in that dim room pleasuring their souls with the exchange of congenial thoughts until the fury of the afternoon was spent when Holman persuaded her to defy the heat and stroll with him on the shaded side of the avenue or under the newly-leaved trees in the park. On other occasions she had walked with him and to be at her side in Fifth avenue spoken to by men who were proud to number him among their acquaintances or returning the salutes to her of those men and women he wished greatly to know was a summit of happiness to which he was desirous of ascending again and again. Today they had hardly left Sixty-fifth street when Austin Pemberton passed them in a hansom. He leaned far out and included them both in a bow that was eloquent in its expression of familiar acquaintance.

Harriet laughed. "Poor Mr. Pemberton," she sighed, "he must have to salute so many in that way. Whenever he bows in that manner, he seems to me to be expressing his readiness to embrace the whole world as his best friend."

Without a defined purpose they walked south and were at the entrance of the park when they paused to allow a pair of bay trotters to pass, superb horses, perfect in every line, that lifted their feet clear and high as they drew along at a walk a rubber-tired runabout, narrow,

low and so light that the two trotters scarcely felt its weight.

Harriet had not observed that Holman was regarding the animals with the pleasure of one who knows and loves horses written in his face. Unconsciously she touched his arm lightly.

"Look" she cried. "Look at these splendid horses. What beauties they are."

"Wesley," called Holman his voice low but carrying the word distinctly. The man driving the pair turned quickly as he heard his name and, seeing Holman, touched his hat and halted, drawing the horses to one side of the circle.

"Don't you wish to see them at closer range in order to look them over more carefully?" he asked Harriet. "They are mine and I am very fond of them. I am delighted they have pleased you."

He led the way past the near horse patting him as he approached, saying gently as he laid his hand on the animal's back: "Steady, Fly; steady, old boy."

Holman stood before the horses with Harriet at his side.

"I want you to know two of my friends;" he said to Harriet, "two of my companions. They bear honored names; this is Fancy and this one is Fly." He stroked playfully one after the other as he pronounced their appellations. "When I was a small boy in Virginia, my father had a pair of fast horses, the fastest in all the country which was noted, and is still, for its good horses. The proudest recollection of my youth is of a certain summer day, hotter a good deal than this one, when my father permitted me to drive the pair in a race at the County fair. I was just fourteen but as big and strong as the farmer's boy of popular fiction. We won three straight heats and broke the track record. Do you wonder that I was proud? Those horses were named Fancy and Fly. They were the finest horses in all the

world to me. Not long ago I found in New York, these two horses with long pedigree and fine records, and so nearly like the splendid pair I drove that summer day that they might have been substituted for Fancy and Fly. I wouldn't listen to their new names. They were Fancy and Fly to me as soon as I saw them and, when they became mine, which they did on that same day, they became Fancy and Fly to the Speedway and to the whole world and will remain so until they are fine old pensioners turned out to pasture for the rest of their lives. They are worthy successors too; in every way worthy." And Holman, smiling at Harriet, bowed deferentially to the two horses tossing their bridles and bowing back to him.

Harriet inclined her head laughingly. "Oh, you beautiful creatures," she cried, caressing them.

Holman regarded her quizzically. "Would you dare —" he began but stopped.

"Dare?" she prompted.

"Dare to brave conventions and give yourself the pleasure of a drive behind the fastest pair the Speedway knows."

She laughed as a school girl contemplating a romantic adventure made doubly dear because forbidden.

"Pshaw," he taunted as she hesitated. "You're afraid."

Her laughter joined merrily with the clink of the harness as the horses tossed their heads.

"See," added Holman, "Fancy and Fly are urging you."

"My aunt," she thought aloud.

"Your aunt," he admitted defiantly. "Do you dare?" he repeated.

"Yes," she cried. "I dare—with you."

"Hurrah! I promise you that you will have more fun than you have had since——"

"Since?"

"Since you smuggled chocolate and sugar into your

room at school and made fudge against the rules expressly provided for such offenders."

"How do you know I made fudge?"

He answered her with his boy's laugh. He did not confide to her that he had gained his knowledge through one of Zaidee's offences at boarding school.

The driver descended and Holman helped Harriet into the runabout taking his place at her side. The horses appeared to know his firm but gentle hold upon the reins. They went north through the park. Even the burgeoning trees or those but recently full-leaved and the soft new grass seemed as languid as in mid-summer and all the world about them was as sleepy as a country field on a still day just before the harvest. But drowsiness was no part of the two bays that Holman guided along the drive.

Harriet marvelled at his perfect control of their exhaustless energy. They drove out Manhattan avenue, pedestrians pausing to watch them as they passed.

"You said you dared," Holman challenged gaily. "'Dare much or not at all' is my motto. We are bound for the Speedway."

As they entered that wonderful drive Harriet trembled a little with pleasure and excitement. The Speedway in a racing runabout behind the fastest pair of horses the city could boast, was to her another world where her imagination, bound by convention, had never entered. Several others were out and as Holman sent his pair at a quicker gait a sorrel pacer, long and gaunt, came alongside and forged past them.

"Eh, Fancy, Fly." Harriet heard Holman's low admonition and felt the pace of the two horses quicken in obedience to his word. The light runabout seemed not to exist as a thing on wheels. It was if they were upon a kite that was being drawn through the rushing air by that swift force before them. The pacer, straining until he broke, was overtaken and left behind. Harriet ex-

ulted in the chase and its victory and in the prowess of the man at her side. As their speed increased she clung to his coat-sleeve, fearful of falling from the narrow seat, and when, at last, the horses, obedient to his touch, slowed down to a walk, she was still holding to Holman, absorbed in her sensations. As Holman speeded the pair again Harriet, now more accustomed to the flying hoofs, looked at him and read in his face the pride and pleasure this association with his two favorite horses gave him. For her the exhibition was merely another phase of his mastery but, because of it, he became to her more gentle and tender, more human than he had ever been before.

A cool east wind tempered the late afternoon as they drove homeward. In the short space up the avenue between the Park entrance and Sixty-fourth street she saw two men she knew and their unconcealed surprise brought back to her the exquisite little tremor with which she had started upon her adventure.

"I want to thank you for an afternoon as pleasant as it was unusual," she said to Holman when they arrived before her house. "I am glad I dared."

He helped her out of the runabout and the two horses turned their heads in friendly interest as she left the vehicle.

"They are as pleased and proud as I am," Holman assured her with a laugh. "It is the first time they have had such an honor. I could feel they were on their mettle this afternoon."

Harriet waited at the open door until Holman lifted his hat as the corner of the street hid them from each other. Then she turned into the house, exultantly happy.

In the drawing room Harriet found Mrs. Van Alstyne and Mrs. Kirkland. It was the former who spoke.

"Harriet, how could you?" There was a volume of reproach in the four words.

"Could I?" questioned Harriet. "Could I what, Aunt Cornelia?"

"Ride in that awful trap and with that man."

"Oh you saw us then?" Harriet's voice grew cold and formal. She stood ready to resent the inquiry into her conduct.

"Saw you? Of course I saw you. How could any one help seeing you?" Mrs. Van Alstyne answered scornfully.

Harriet turned away quickly to conceal her annoyance. Her aunt, encouraged, perhaps by this passivity, pressed her advantage.

"Really, Harriet, I can not understand how you of all persons could have been so forgetful of your mother's training; so—" she hesitated for a word "so bold as to ride in such a trap." Harriet controlled her rising indignation well. "You are no longer a girl, Harriet," her aunt pursued. "You are a woman and must be judged as a woman. You seem lately to have lost your head; you flaunt this man everywhere. It would almost seem as if you did it to annoy me. He is detestable, impossible." She paused for lack of adjectives.

"I suppose, Aunt Cornelia," Harriet said, her voice quavering in spite of her effort to appear calm, "I suppose you refer to Mr. Holman. You said that I am no longer a girl. You are quite right; I am a woman, Aunt Cornelia, and capable of acting for myself. Mr. Holman is my friend. I will not hear him disparaged. Oh!" she cried, the protest escaping from her heart, "how little you know the man you are reviling."

"Harriet, surely, surely—" Mrs. Van Alstyne put in, astonished by her niece's vigorous defence of Holman. "You can't be seriously interested in this man."

"He is nobler than any man you or I know," the girl persisted.

"He is detestable, an anarchist, a mountebank, a revolutionary." Mrs. Van Alstyne exclaimed, her temper rising.

"Aunt Cornelia——"

But Mrs. Van Alstyne swept on. "He associates with low people. He parades an awful woman—a Spanish woman—"

"Stop," cried Harriet, "I will not let you. I will not hear it."

"Let me!" Mrs. Van Alstyne's flabby face took on a look of wonder. "Harriet, I am your aunt, your poor mother's sister. You seem to have forgotten yourself entirely."

"I have not forgotten, Aunt Cornelia," Harriet asserted calmly, "but you must not speak so of Mr. Holman."

"Must not—well!" Mrs. Van Alstyne's rage again outran her vocabulary and she turned in inarticulate wrath to Mrs. Kirkland. "Come, Helen," she said at length "I am going."

"I think, Cornelia, it would be better for me, perhaps, to stay and talk with Harriet."

"Very well," Mrs. Van Alstyne turned away. She had no protest left. "I shall certainly speak to your father," she warned Harriet as she left the room and went downstairs to the door.

Not until Mrs. Van Alstyne was well out of the house did Harriet speak. She turned at last toward Mrs. Kirkland. "I am sorry, Aunt Helen," she said. "Aunt Cornelia seems bent on quarrelling with me."

Mrs. Kirkland rose and came to her niece's side.

"Poor Cornelia," she said, laying a hand on Harriet's arm. "She doesn't like this Mr. Holman and she was awfully shocked to see you drive up in that wicked looking runabout. I confess, Harriet——"

But Harriet interrupted her, foreseeing the criticism. "Why shouldn't I?" she asked. "Why isn't it as respectable as a victoria? It's a mere matter of silly convention and I am tired to death of silly conventions."

"Yes, but you can't escape them, Harriet."

"We can if we are brave enough."

Mrs. Kirkland sighed.

"That's what I most admire in Mr. Holman," Harriet went on. "He is not afraid. He has the courage of his convictions and dares to do what he knows to be right. Oh, if only more men were like him!"

Mrs. Kirkland looked at her niece with kindly shrewdness.

"I hope, Harriet," she said gently, arranging a lock of the girl's hair that, like an escaped bird, was enjoying its freedom in fluttering about the place where it had been imprisoned, "I hope, Harriet, there is nothing serious in all this; that you do not really——" She allowed her niece's imagination to finish the sentence.

Harriet's lips moved as if she were about to speak. A little kindness so often brings confession near but, instead of answering her aunt's inquiry, she kissed her softly on the cheek and, turning, walked to the window, looking out into the gathering twilight at the lights as they appeared one by one in the houses opposite.

CHAPTER XXII

MR. McQUADE HEARS OF A DYING MAN'S CONFESSION

The calendar on David Holman's desk in his West Tenth street home showed that it was Monday the thirteenth day of June. Crowded into the broad space beneath the date were memoranda in Holman's hand-writing and he ran hastily over these reminders of work before him while Xavier, hat in hand, stood at his side waiting for letters to be posted or delivered. Xavier's tow head was now filled with delightful dreams. He was debating long and carefully whether he would prefer to be attached to the White House in a confidential capacity or, by becoming a page in the Senate, make the beginning of an illustrious career, after the approved method of men whose biographies in the newspapers had fired his young ambition. Sure of his Chief's success, Xavier was too well versed in the politics of his ward not to expect some share of the spoils. Decision was difficult; both places were to be desired and Xavier was casting about for a third position that might help him solve the problem when the butler announced that a man was waiting below who insisted upon seeing Mr. Holman and delivering a letter which he was under orders to give to no one else.

Holman instructed that the man be admitted to the library. He was a close-cropped, pock-marked, shifty fellow, gracefully proportioned. Something in his walk, or in the manner of holding his hands, brought back to Xavier one of his most vivid recollections: that of a man, naked to the waist, lying white and senseless in a roped ring while the raucous voices of disappointed or

exultant men beat upon the air, foggy with smoke, in curses or cheers for the defeat of him who had so lately been Champion of Cherry Hill.

The man's quick glance took in Holman, the waiting boy and the details of the room as he advanced to the desk.

"Mr. Holman." Holman nodded, although the inflection was so slight that it scarcely carried a question. "Here is a letter to be delivered to you personally."

Holman tore open the unaddressed envelope and read:

This is to remind you that it was agreed to meet at Reardon's Chapel, near Port Chester, day after tomorrow, Wednesday, June 15. Come alone about nine p. m.

"There is no answer," Holman informed the bearer of the note. The man turned lightly on his feet and, with the slightest of bows, walked briskly from the room.

Xavier, his eyes shining with suppressed excitement, could contain his important information no longer. As soon as he heard the street door close he blurted out: "Say, do you know who that was?"

Holman shook his head.

"That was the Slugger."

"The Slugger?"

"Sure, that was Marty Brennan, the Slugger. He used to be the middle-weight champion of Cherry hill."

Holman affected a fitting surprise. It would never do to disappoint Xavier by an exhibition of such crass ignorance.

"No, you don't mean it!"

"Sure," cried the boy. "Gee, I was wise to him the minute he opened the door. He's a back number now—put out by Kid Sullivan. I saw the fight: I did, honest—saw the Slugger go down and out in the ninth round. Since then he hasn't had a scrap. He's a has-been, all

right. He's got some phoney job with the Boss; Boss McQuade, you know."

Encouraged, Xavier described that last historic battle of the Slugger, prattling on while Holman answered the note of Jerry McQuade.

"I have not forgotten," Holman wrote, "and will not fail. I should prefer almost any other meeting place, but, if the one you suggest is most convenient for you, I shall make no objections. If I do not hear from you again I shall consider that the original arrangement stands and will be at the Chapel at nine o'clock Wednesday evening."

Xavier had not concluded his epic recital when the note was finished and Holman, with a show of delighted appreciation, waited for the ninth round.

"That's great!" he applauded when the defeated Champion had been duly counted out; then after a proper pause: "Please call the stenographer."

Holman's note was duly type-written and Xavier departed with it for McQuade's Second avenue residence, impressed with instructions that the note was to be delivered to Mr. McQuade in person.

Redmond, the reporter, now a valued member of the *Sphere's* staff, serving brilliantly the *Epoch's* rival, was discussing literature with Patsy, the bartender, in the saloon across the street when Xavier ascended the steps to McQuade's dignified portal. Patsy was indulging in an appreciation of Byron and Redmond, agreeing with him, paused in the middle of a sentence as he recognized Holman's office boy at McQuade's door. Patsy followed the direction of his glance, but, observing nothing unusual in the picture of a tow-headed youngster on the broad steps, seized the opening to quote:

"A king sate on the rocky brow
Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis;
And ships, by thousands, lay below

And men in nations;—all were his!
He counted them at break of day—
And, when the sun set, where were they?"

Omitting the less favored stanzas he had arrived at,

"Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
We will not think of themes like these!"

when Redmond, who had seen the door open and shut on Xavier, interrupted.

"Patsy, there's something doing in this neighborhood. I have a gentle premonition that, while you and I are revelling in Byron's musical numbers, there is something much more practical than poetry taking place under our eyes—something, Patsy," Redmond added mysteriously. "that should stir our souls more than verse."

"A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine—
Dash down yon cup of Samian wine!"

Patsy quoted, more to accord with Redmond's sentiment than his own, for he knew that the reporter hated McQuade with all the hatred of a patriot burning to fight. As for himself, his dreams of freedom were confined to Ireland or Greece or some countries even more remote; like many another he was in arms against the slavery of distant people while his own bondage sat lightly on him.

Patsy, unmoved by the disclosure of his friend, fell to reciting poetry again while Redmond, outwardly attentive, thought hard of other things. His imagination was flying like a shuttle, weaving a fabric from the slender thread that had been given him. David Holman must be in negotiation with his sworn enemy, Jerry McQuade, and, in that fact alone, there was a volume of meaning. As he watched with eyes that never for a moment left McQuade's door, waiting for Xavier's exit, Redmond saw Martin Brennan, the Slugger, swing into

the avenue and take the steps two at a time. It was nothing, however, for the Slugger to be seen at McQuade's house; it was public knowledge that the Boss employed him on confidential missions, generally supposed to be of a nature to discourage those who valued a whole skin.

Patsy, embracing to the full his unusual opportunity, had recited to the patient Redmond

"She walks in Beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;"

and the song from "The Corsair" that begins

"Deep in my soul that tender secret dwells,"

and was launched on the Health to Tom Moore when Xavier reappeared. Redmond, with an abrupt "So long!" left him at

"Though 'twere the last drop in the cup"

and, disappearing through the swinging doors at a run, overtook Xavier as the office boy was turning westward.

"Why, hello, Xavier," he called in greeting.

"Hello, Mr. Redmond." The boy was flattered to be thus accosted on the street by the *Epoch's* former "star" reporter.

"How are things at the office?"

"Oh, same old stunt," Xavier was wary, for he could not forget that Redmond was now in the enemy's camp.

"Keeping you busy?"

"You bet!"

"How's the Chief these days?"

"Oh, he's all right."

"Does he get down to the office much or do the big politicians keep him too busy at home?"

"Chief's all right," the boy answered proudly.

"See much of him these days?"

"Sure; just left him;" Xavier's pride of place went before his fall. Redmond had got what he wanted—so, it was a quiet negotiation, as he had suspected—but still he persisted.

"You aren't a reporter, yet, are you, Xavier?" The boy grinned at the compliment.

"Well, I ain't far off," he admitted.

"Oh, you will be on the staff soon," Redmond assured him.

Xavier, puffed with the importance of his present mission, could not be silent. "Say, the Chief gives me things to do sweller than reportin'," he boasted.

"Is that so? What?"

"Oh, ferget it," the boy replied enigmatically.

"Secret, eh? Jove, you are getting along, Xavier. Politics, too, I suppose; no mere news assignment."

"You're wise," cried the delighted boy, tickled beyond expression by the impression he was creating. "It's politics and big politics, too."

"Good work, Xavier," praised the reporter. "Keep it up and you'll land in a good, fat government job. Or maybe, Boss McQuade will take a fancy to you and put you into something easy just as he has done for Slugger Brennan. Do you know the Slugger?"

"Know him! Of course." Xavier contemptuously resented the implication of ignorance.

"Well, he has something good. I saw him just a moment ago on the run for McQuade's house."

Xavier laughed aloud. "Running?" he exclaimed. "Gee! I beat him there and he left the Chief's house a good ten minutes before I did."

It was all out now—all that Xavier knew. Redmond could deduce the rest. He had been shown the two go-betweens carrying messages ponderous with importance to the coming convention and that was foundation enough

for a political sensation. He was eager to get back to his office with the news he had so accidentally learned. As Redmond took leave of Xavier at the corner he felt a touch of compassion for the little fellow who had all unconsciously betrayed his trust and he resolved that, when the news to be deduced from the boy's words, was in print neither Holman nor even Xavier himself could suspect the source from which it came.

Redmond went on his way and he and his city editor discussed, with heads together, the momentous "beat;" Xavier returned to Holman's house to bring a smile of amusement to the face of his Chief as he made his report. And Martin Brennan, the Slugger, spent an uncomfortable half hour under McQuade's sharp eyes relating for the second time the results of that westward journey he had made to learn the hidden things of Holman's early career and from which he had just returned.

"Tell it over again, Marty," commanded the Boss. "I want to make sure I've got the facts as you heard 'em."

"It's a tough place out there," Martin commented by way of a beginning. McQuade looked at him; it must, indeed, be tough if the Slugger found it so. "But it ain't half as bad, they say, as it useter be. Them as was there about the time Holman and this Dago, Gonzales, makes their strike say it was hell. Even now there ain't a policeman in the place and there's four thousand men, mostly Greasers, and nearly all workin' on Holman's mine. He owns mighty near the whole county but there's other mines not so far away. When anybody gets scrappy or disagreeable there, they don't fuss about it; they just shoot. There's a sheriff and some deputy sheriffs who get busy on special occasions, but generally the town runs itself and keeps wide open and on one of the streets there ain't nothin' else but saloons. An' in each saloon is a faro-joint with a music-hall in the back where bum singers sing coon songs sometime or, generally, they sing in Mexican. The men that ain't playin' faro

or listenin' to the music, or playin' monte in a corner are lined up at the bar. You remember Slick Sam Hannan's place in Essex street?" He paused for confirmation. McQuade nodded. "Well, that bum whiskey Slick Sam uster sell was forty-year old, ninety proof compared to the best whiskey you can get in Holmanville."

"But about this ole man, Marty; what about him? Where's he at?"

The Slugger shifted uneasily. He had spun his story out in the vain hope of escaping that question. There was no way now of dodging the issue.

"Damn, if I don't believe I've lost him," he confessed.

"Lost him!" McQuade half rose from his chair, his glance cutting out from under his heavy brows like a harpoon.

"Damn, if I don't believe so."

"Then, why in ——, didn't you say so yesterday instead of beatin' about the bush?"

McQuade was a lion, ready to spring, and the Slugger was helpless.

"Is he really lost?" the Boss seemed ready to give the man another chance.

"The fool," Martin exclaimed, qualifying the epithet with oaths. "He tells me this story in a saloon and promises to meet me there the next night but the next night he ain't there and I learn where he lives and goes to his boarding house but he ain't there either and the next day I goes again and they say they believe he's left town but they didn't know where he'd went to. For three days an' nights I searched ev'ry joint in that town for him. If I'd a found him I'd a pulled him out by the whiskers. Then I goes to El Paso, but I can't find him and I goes back to Holmanville but he ain't been seen."

McQuade's glance had held the man throughout his explanation; now it left him but he continued to frown.

"Tell me the rest of the story again," the Boss ordered, "just as this ole man told it to you."

"He was a Dago named Manuel Cabrera, near as I could get it. He knows Holman in the early days when Holman is prospecting with this Tony Gonzales. Gonzales was a Dago, too, and was this here Cabrera's best friend. They'd had a quarrel over a girl; one of them dance-hall girls. They was both in love with her but she goes to live with Gonzales, and Cabrera lights out. It's after that that Gonzales, who had some pretty good lookin' claims located, takes up with Holman and they strikes it rich. Every thing in all that country went wild, Cabrera said, over the strike.

"Yer see if Cabrera hadn't quarreled with Gonzales half that mine would a been his, he says, fer it was Gonzales' find. But it ain't that so much as makes him sore as it is the story this other Dago tells to him when he's dyin' down in El Paso. Just 'bout time it begins to be seen what a big thing Holman and Gonzales had got into, Gonzales, who played faro lots and hung about the saloons, gets into a row with another Greaser named Cordova, a sort of a Jew, from what Cabrera says, and Cordova shoots him dead. Holman takes care of Gonzales' widow an' Gonzales' little girl. Holman takes care of 'em both but in a little while the widow dies an' somehow, because Holman had worked up the property and made it pay, he gets the whole mine, but he gives a share in it to this little girl; not much, they say, when you think of what he's got, but enough to make her rich."

"Go on; go on," interrupted McQuade. "Get to the other part."

"Oh! the Dago that died? I'm a comin' to that. Well, this here Cabrera is down in El Paso just about a year ago when who does he run across but this Jew, Cordova. Cordova was down an' out; not a cent. Cabrera ain't much better fixed but he stakes Cordova to something to eat and then they get to talkin' about ole times. Cordova has a bad cough; one lung gone, Cabrera says, and the other pretty near as bad. Cabrera never liked him any

too well but, because both of 'em was down on their luck, 'cause it's as Cabrera says, it makes you want to sympathize with somethin' or somebody when you're wantin' sympathy yerself, Cabrera helps this Cordova and stays by him when the Jew gets worse and can't leave the boardin' house where Cabrera had staked him to a room."

"Get down to the bone, Marty," McQuade ordered.

"Well, there ain't much more to tell. I was givin' you all the details as Cabrera give 'em to me; you know the rest. One night when Cordova sees it was all up with him and he can't hold out more'n a few hours longer he whispers to Cabrera that he's got a confession to make.

" 'I killed Tony Gonzales' he cries so hoarse, Cabrera says, it sounded like he was shoutin'. 'I killed Tony Gonzales, Cabrera, but it wasn't a square fight. David Holman put me up to it. I did it for a thousan' dollars gold,' 'gold,' he says, because they used to pay sometimes in Mexican money," the Slugger explained. McQuade waved away the explanation impatiently.

"He says Holman paid him for killin' Gonzales and that he shoots before Gonzales has a chance to get out his gun," the Slugger summed up. "'It was a put-up job 'cause Holman wanted the mine,' he says to Cabrera, 'an' I wouldn't die easy till I told it'."

" 'Cabrera' he says, 'get a doctor, quick.' Them were his last words for there's a big spurt o' blood an' he chokes to death before Cabrera can get a soul to help him."

The Slugger wished to escape the conclusion but McQuade forced it on him saying:

"An' you let this man get away from you, Marty?" There was a wealth of reproach in his voice.

"I couldn't help it." The Slugger was penitent. "Cabrera tells me he'd come up to Holmanville to find out, maybe, somethin' more about the shootin'. He says he'd an idea of doin' somethin' about it if he could; he wouldn't say what. Holman wasn't there; hadn't been

there but once in six years. Then the very day I find Cabrera and has this talk with him he tells me he just heard that Gonzales' little girl was still livin' somewhere, he says, in New York or Yurruup. He didn't seem to know where but he was mighty excited about it and says he must find her. I was to meet him at the same saloon the next night but he never showed up an' "—the Slugger made a clean breast of it, "an' I don't know where he's went."

McQuade was silent for a moment; then he said: "That's all, Marty. We've got to find that ole man."

The Slugger rose, ready to depart aimlessly on his search. He would have gone through the city blindfolded to show his eagerness to atone his fault, but McQuade detained him with a gesture.

"Marty, that ole man was headed for New York. He'll try to see Holman—" a cynical smile spread under the gray beard as the Boss added, "probably to hold him up for money."

Martin shook his head. "No, he ain't that kind," was his verdict.

"Well, at any rate you watch Holman's office. The ole man won't go to the house."

The Slugger departed with his orders, glad to have received no severer reprimand for what he, himself, regarded as a serious lapse from his own high standards of thorough work. When he had left the house McQuade rose. For a while he walked up and down before his desk, pondering—a stocky well-knit figure that carried age as it carried opprobrium, lightly. He was thinking deeply. In the midst of his walk he paused.

"They may not be able to prove it and it may not be so; probably isn't," he muttered, "but that would make a pretty campaign story, David Holman, a very pretty story."

CHAPTER XXIII

AT THE CHAPEL

Holman dined early that he might not be late for his interview with Jerry McQuade. It was not a business that he relished and, therefore, he sought to get through with it without delay, following his rule of never procrastinating because the undertaking was distasteful.

After dinner he went to his library and took from his desk a revolver, long, blue-black and grim, bristling with business. He examined it carefully before he slipped it into a side-pocket of his coat where it could rest naturally in his hand, an unsuspected barrier, that he might raise between himself and treacherous beasts of prey. Holman smiled cynically at his caution. In the crowded, well-policed city he had felt no need of a weapon until lately when the air had become sharp with that spirit of pitiless strife that bids men commit crimes to gain their ends. The savage instinct had returned and, again, as in those lawless Arizona days, the wild beasts seemed to be round about him, and now, as then, he had fallen into the habit of arming himself. Tonight was to be no pleasant affair; there might be some disagreeable surprise; he might be walking into a trap; it was well to be prepared.

McQuade had paid no attention to Holman's expressed preference for a meeting place other than the malodorous Chapel, and Holman, as he drove in his automobile in the early hours of night along the road through Westchester, was conscious of irritation that McQuade should have ignored his suggestion.

"Very well, McQuade," he thought, "let it be your own roost, if you like, but fair play, my old fox, and."

remember, you are not dealing with one of your ward-heelers now."

Holman had not paid strict heed to McQuade's injunction to come alone. On the seat beside him, almost hidden in the heavy robes, was Xavier. Holman had determined to have the boy accompany him, believing that, at the last moment, he might need a sure and unsuspecting messenger to send back to the city and he had calculated that, in case McQuade's instructions had been intended for strict observance, the boy might dispose himself among the robes of the car so as not to attract attention. To Xavier the night ride was full of mystery and adventure. He heard the mystic rustling of the trees in the park as the car whirled over the white road, the lights blinking uncertainly among the shadows on either side. When they passed out of the city into the open country the air, as they sped along, beat against his face and whistled in his ears until, to his imagination, the car was a flying-machine skimming the earth's surface like a giant swallow. Below he saw the yellow ribbon of light on the road ahead; beyond that all was darkness. They were flying into an unknown world through uncharted air, black and alive with danger. The fearless pilot at the wheel, long worshipped from afar, was henceforth his hero.

Xavier, unconscious of the flight of time, was startled when Holman leaned forward and said to the chauffeur:

"I think that's it; the house on the hill. Turn in there,"

Xavier at first could see nothing that resembled a house but, presently, chimneys and a roof loomed brown-black against the blue-black sky. The chauffeur left his place to open a gate. Xavier would have delighted in performing the service for him but Holman restrained him.

"Sit still," the Chief commanded. "And pull the robes up about you. And when I am in the house, don't talk."

The boy's cup of happiness was full; it was the final drop in that delicious mysterious draught.

The machine stopped before the door of the rambling old brick mansion. As Holman stepped from the car the door opened for the space of a foot and an ill-featured man in half-livery peered out.

"Is this Reardon's?" Holman asked.

"Yes." The monosyllable was surly.

"I want you to wait right here. If any one tells you to move away don't do it," Holman said to his chauffeur as he stepped inside.

The door closed behind him and at the same moment a woman advanced from another room. He knew from description that she must be Mag Reardon. She smiled not unpleasantly.

"You were looking for some one?" He respected her caution.

"Mr. McQuade," he answered.

With a request that Holman follow, she led the way up a broad flight of stairs that ascended from the end of the hall. They traversed the wide corridor above and the woman opened a door at the right. Holman entered. Seated in an easy chair by a table was Jerry McQuade. He rose as the woman closed the door and the two men shook hands prefactorily as prize-fighters shake hands when they enter the ring.

Holman alone spoke. "Glad to see you, sir," he said. From the Boss there came, as he resumed his seat, an answering grunt that could not be called speech.

McQuade pointed to another easy chair. On the table was a freshly opened box of cigars, a bottle of champagne, a bottle of whiskey and glasses.

"Help yourself," said the Boss. McQuade lost none of his grimness in attempting civilities.

Holman waved aside the invitation without thanks. "I neither smoke nor drink," he remarked. He removed his light overcoat and, placing it with his hat and gloves,

took the proffered seat and waited. McQuade, reaching with some difficulty from the depths of his chair, helped himself to a cigar and lighted it.

"You wanted to see me," he said at length.

"I wanted to see if you wanted to see me," Holman corrected.

McQuade frowned. "Let's get down to business. You want my support for the convention."

"I do." Holman was borrowing his manner from the other man.

"Forney told me you said to him that on the morning of the convention Abner Heyward would come out in support of you and throw you his delegates."

Holman affected surprise and indignation.

"What I said to Senator Forney was said confidentially," he asserted with warmth.

McQuade paused. He blew the smoke from his mouth slowly before replying. "Mr. Holman, you're a lot too sharp to say anything to Wade Forney confidentially."

It surprised Holman to hear the "check" so clearly sounded thus early in the game.

"I have no means of knowing what Senator Forney said to you." Holman was paying back as nearly as he could in the same coin. McQuade was unmoved.

"It doesn't make any difference," he asserted, "what you said to him or what he said to me. I didn't believe at the time you could get Heyward's delegates and I don't believe it now. If you could you wouldn't be here tonight trying to get my support."

The logic was irresistible. Holman did not reply. He waited to see McQuade's next move.

"Why do you want to be president?"

It was as if Holman were on the witness stand in his own defence, and this man before him, the prosecuting attorney.

"Is it an ambition that requires explanation?" he asked.

"It is," was McQuade's dry answer. "Do you want to

be president just to satisfy a personal vanity or do you want more than that; are you trying to get control of the Party?"

Holman laughed mirthlessly. "You do not attribute high motives to candidates, Mr. McQuade."

McQuade did not smile. "I've known a lot of candidates, Mr. Holman," he answered.

"Well, then, suppose we say," Holman was jocular, "that it is to satisfy my vanity; suppose we admit that. But there is another reason you seem to have overlooked."

McQuade peered out from under his bushy eyebrows.

"I want to be president, Mr. McQuade, because the people of this country want me to be President and isn't it about time the People for once had what they wanted?"

"You're quite right." His voice seemed less gruff. "You're quite right. The People should have what they want and I am not at all sure that they really do not want you."

Holman believed he was beating down this gray old wall before him. "We seem at last, to be getting to the terms of agreement," he sneered.

McQuade was at him like a flash. "Not so fast," he warned, "before any agreement is reached there are lots of preliminaries to settle."

Holman was taken back. The victory, then, was not to be an easy one. This stubborn old man was rich in objections.

"I think that you must have seen that the People really do want me," Holman argued. "I believe even Heyward's closest friends admit that. You might ask Mr. O'Malley, who will be on your delegation. He's pretty outspoken for Heyward."

"You needn't be afraid of Mr. O'Malley."

"No; I am not. But he might tell you what Heyward's people are thinking." McQuade's answering "H'm" was big with doubt.

Holman strove to move McQuade in another way. "I

can get the support of Wall street," he announced. "I've already got it."

Holman looked for surprise but McQuade showed none. "So I've heard," he said and it was Holman's turn to be surprised. "Such things get to me pretty quick. But you are dealing with me now, Mr. Holman, not Wall street."

The color rushed in under the smooth, swarthy skin on Holman's cheeks but, almost instantly, he was cold as steel again and met the Boss's surliness with politeness.

"Mr. McQuade," Holman began, "we might as well face the matter squarely. I may get the nomination without your help, but, with your aid, the nomination is sure and I believe I can be elected easily."

"Without my help you surely cannot win; don't make any mistake about that, Mr. Holman. With my help, perhaps—but I am not so sure."

"Not sure!" Holman was incredulous.

McQuade's cigar had gone out. He took a fresh one and lighted it with deliberation. Holman rose from his chair and made a survey of the room. It was a corner room and on two sides were curtained windows. Holman went to these and looked out. From one of the windows he saw his waiting automobile. He went to the only door and opened it. The hall-way was deserted. McQuade watched these proceedings with a smile so faint that it might have been a sneer.

"You will pardon me for being prudent," Holman explained as he resumed his seat. "You probably know the place but I do not and it is well to see that no meddlesome servants have ears glued to key-holes or windows."

"Rest easy; you needn't be afraid," McQuade assured him. "The woman who runs this place knows her business and—she knows me." The last phrase fell from him like a threat.

But McQuade rested his faith on shifting sands.

Above him, so that the table at which he and Holman sat was directly beneath her gaze, with her eye against a hole in the floor, its opening into the room below cleverly concealed, Mag Reardon lay at full length as motionless as a statue. Scarcely daring to breathe, she lay there in the dark where she could watch every movement and hear every word of the two men, her eye fastened like the sight of a rifle, first on one speaker and then on the other.

"You were saying when I interrupted——?" Holman was suave.

McQuade bent his head with its shock of thick gray hair nearer the candidate.

"Mr. Holman, is there anything in your past or present life that could be used against you; anything that might turn the people away from you?" The Boss had a knack of asking unexpected questions.

Holman smiled. "My life is as an open book."

"Nothing in your mining days that could come up now?"

"Nothing."

"No nasty shooting scrape for profit——"

Holman's hand dropped as by magic to the revolver in his pocket. He gazed fiercely at the Boss. McQuade's face was luminous; he had received answer enough,— "or revenge," he added. "I merely asked because such things so often happen in a far West mining town and, sometimes, come up disagreeably afterward."

"There is nothing, Mr. McQuade," Holman replied calmly. He removed his hand from his pocket. For a moment he had been shifted back to his old mining days.

"Nothing in your present life they could find out?"

"May I ask why this rather impertinent cross-questioning?"

"Because, Mr. Holman, if there is anything I want to know it. I make no bargain blind. When I make a bargain I stick to it, but not for you and all your money

would I do a thing that would not only make me ridiculous but, maybe, kill the organization I control. And if there are such things that could come up in the campaign against you, you would be the worst defeated man that ever ran for the presidency in America. I couldn't save you and no one else could save you. I told you I wasn't sure about your being able to carry the country. The People seem to be with you now, but they are uncertain. The least thing would turn them against you. They don't entirely trust you as it is, and one false move and you would be dead—as dead and buried as Aaron Burr."

In his heart Holman believed this shrewd old man spoke the truth.

"There ain't anything they could bring up against you?" McQuade repeated.

"Nothing," Holman answered solemnly.

"How about this Spanish woman?"

Holman started.

"I presume you mean the lady who is my ward."

"I guess so; this Spanish beauty."

Holman was icy. "She is my ward. We will leave her out of the discussion. I permit no man, Mr. McQuade, to make insinuations against her."

McQuade's eyes were fastened on his. There ain't any use bluffin', Mr. Holman. It's somethin' I never do, an' somethin' no one ever does with me an' gets away with it. I say what I mean. If you don't like to hear it you can call this conference off any time you want to. You haven't got to hear me; you haven't got to agree with me. It's just my plain statement of facts."

"At least you have a bald, blunt way of presenting your facts." Holman was still nettled.

"My ways are my ways," retorted McQuade. "There've been many that didn't like 'em, but I never saw fit to change 'em an' I guess I'm too old to begin now."

Holman rose and towered above the gray old Boss, his voice surcharged with a defiant scorn.

"You like straight talk and few words," he flashed angrily. "Well, here are mine; and here's the meaning of this conference: How much do you want?"

The woman stretched on the floor of the room above, heard the words ring out crisp and clear and her flesh went cold as she caught the heavy answer of the Boss, fired like a shot.

"You're dead right, Holman. I want one million dollars!"

"One million dollars!" Holman snarled his contempt.

"One million dollars and not a cent less!" McQuade's voice was as hard as cut crystal.

Holman, inwardly raging, became outwardly calm. In his many speculations as to McQuade's price he had never put the sum half as high as that now demanded. And it galled him to know that he must pay or forfeit his hope of the nomination. With difficulty he hid the rage that prompted him to crush this insolent, inexorable old man.

"You've got a good opinion of your worth; so that's *your* price, McQuade?" he sneered. Come what might that question with its biting contempt gained Holman an enemy for life.

"That's my price, Mister Holman." The veteran Boss, as cool as the younger man, laid an ironical accent on the title.

"And the People? Have they nothing to do with it? Don't they influence your demand?" The acid of sarcasm ate into every word.

"The People, Mr. Holman," McQuade replied, "will be listened to more when the People know what they really want, instead of being fooled by every quack that comes along with a new cure-all."

A wave of red again spread to Holman's temples but it was gone instantly.

"And if I pay this—this blackmail?" He dropped the

odious word as one hurls a stone into deep water.

"Pay or don't pay; take it or leave it, as you damn please." McQuade was aroused; it was rare that he swore. "But don't think the bargain is as easy as that, my young friend. You can do as you like about accepting and I can tell you I won't be sorry to wash my hands of you, but, if I get the money, I'll do as I say and turn over the delegation to you in a body. I've never gone back on a bargain yet, but before it's all settled there are a few things I've got to know."

Holman looked up inquiringly.

"You've got to promise that if you're elected, you'll take care of my friends; you'll stand by the organization?"

"Of course," Holman assented.

"And there's another thing."

Again Holman's steel gray eyes flashed an interrogation. McQuade came a step nearer to him and said slowly: "You've got to get rid of that woman."

Holman's hands clenched.

"You've got to take care of her in some way that will shut her up," McQuade went on. "Get rid of her; send her away; pay her off, or——" The inspiration struck a spark from his deepset eyes—"or marry her!"

"You seem confident of your ability to manipulate destinies."

"Your political destiny, Mr. Holman," McQuade spoke as impartially as a judge stating the admitted facts in a case, "will be an almighty short one unless you do as I say. If that woman makes any trouble, or if the People learn that these stories about you and her are really true, I wouldn't give a punched dime for your chances in November. There's one thing the American public won't do, and that is to let a man in politics play fast and loose with a woman. You'll have to send her out of the country or else marry her. I think the best plan would

be to marry her. It would keep her and everybody else quiet."

Holman was no longer indignant. The vision of Harriet Stowers leaped suddenly to his mind, a vision of supernal beauty, and something akin to fear laid its hand upon his heart.

He rose. "I'll think it over," he said slowly.

"No, I must have your answer tonight—now." McQuade got up from his chair and stood grim and obdurate before the candidate.

Suddenly there appeared to Holman a way of salvation that sent the blood tingling through his veins. By announcing his engagement to Harriet Stowers before the convention met he could drown the voice of slander there, and, by marrying her before the campaign was well started, he could silence even the most relentless of his enemies. Zaidee might indulge in vain tirades. Absolved by marriage, his past errors would become to a forgiving and forgetting public merely the peccadilloes of youth. He grasped at the saving straw. McQuade could have his money and welcome; it was no more than he had intended to spend and McQuade might as well get it as to divide it among a multitude of delegates. McQuade's support converted into certainty his prospects for the nomination. He would have the place he coveted and, with it, his heart's desire for on Harriet Stowers' assent he counted as on a thing already obtained. It had become his dearest wish, his hope to marry her but he had expected to wait until after the election that success then might make more sure success with her and when Zaidee's anger could do no harm.

Holman made his decision eagerly. "Very well, Mr. McQuade, it shall be as you say. I agree to do my part. The money's yours when you want it."

McQuade went to the table. From a drawer he got out paper, pens and ink.

"Have you a blank cheque?" he asked.

Holman smiled at his expedition. Here, indeed, was a man who would waste no time.

"Yes," he answered. He had brought his cheque-book for this very purpose. And McQuade was not surprised; each had calculated nicely the moves of the other.

Holman paused as he took the pen. "McQuade, one million dollars is a good deal to give just for a man's word," he said.

"I do not ask you to give anything for my word, although my word, Mr. Holman, has never been doubted and men have taken it without question when more depended on it than your million dollars. Date the cheque ahead; make it payable one week after the convention meets. Date it July 5."

The light from an incandescent lamp beat down upon Holman's hand. The eye of the woman in the room above saw him write in the date: July 5; the name of Jeremiah McQuade, the figures and the amount: one million dollars, and sign his name. Holman blotted it and handed it silently to McQuade, who merely glanced at it and, without thanks, placed it among other papers in a wallet he had taken from his pocket.

Holman got into his overcoat briskly and pulled on his gloves. As he was leaving, McQuade asked: "It's all agreed then, is it?"

"All agreed," Holman assented.

"You'll get rid of the woman in some way before the convention meets; make it impossible for her to talk?"

"Yes; I'll take care of her. Goodnight."

Holman let himself out into the hall and went down the wide staircase alone. The door was opened for him by the same ill-featured man who had let him in. The automobile was waiting where he had left it. The chauffeur held open the door of the car for him and then ran to start the motor. Xavier, conscientiously carrying out instructions, made no sound and Holman, who, in the

whirling of his thoughts had forgotten the boy's presence, nearly crushed him under the robe.

"Hello, youngster, asleep?" he exclaimed.

"Not much; jess waitin'." The idea of such a sentry slumbering at his post! To Xavier it was the essence of the absurd.

Holman did not speak again and, once out on the road, the mystery of the flying night recaptured the boy's imagination. The moon nearly full, was rising and, as they sped swiftly up a gentle hill, it lay directly in their path. To Xavier, with romantic fires freshly lighted, the big moon was a golden gateway to a world of dreams; even to the practical, unromantic man by his side it seemed the portal to a bright and wonderful future that he was about to enter.

Behind them, coming at a slower pace in another automobile, rode Jerry McQuade and with him, the former Champion of Cherry Hill. The old Boss, taking in the glory of the night, drew a long breath of contentment and crossed his arms over his breast. Beneath his hand he felt the wallet that contained David Holman's million-dollar cheque.

Far behind, moving silently as a shadow, without a thought of the night, rode an ill-featured man on a bicycle on his way to catch a late train to New York. He no longer wore livery. In the pocket of his coat he carried a letter from Mag Reardon addressed to Senator Wade Forney. Even his drunken requests were as commands to her. She had not forgotten.

CHAPTER XXIV

WHEREIN MR. HOLMAN ENCOUNTERS OB- STACLES AND DEALS WITH THEM PROMPTLY

Holman awoke the next morning with the resolutions of the night before crowding upon his consciousness. He leaped from bed, unwilling that a moment should be lost in putting into execution plans doubly dear to him. As he dressed, every movement quick, definite and bristling with energy, Holman reviewed his bargain with McQuade, the purchase of the old Boss, and dwelt with anticipated delight on the action of the convention and his probable election to the presidency. But above all, so that never for an instant did it leave his mental gaze, was the image of Harriet Stowers. It was early, even for him, and that meant it was early, indeed, and he impatiently prepared himself to wait until an hour when he could see her.

It was Holman's habit to read through cursorily the morning papers while he ate breakfast and, by custom, he began the day with the *Epoch's* chief rival, the *Sphere*.

"I know already, or am supposed to know, what is in the *Epoch*," he was fond of explaining. "What I wish to know first is: What is in the other papers that the *Epoch* fails to have."

As he now spread open the first page of the *Sphere* he saw blazoned in big type the head-lines:

HOLMAN AND M'QUADE IN SECRET CONFERENCE

CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT TRAFFICS WITH
POLITICAL BOSS HE HAS SO
OFTEN DENOUNCED

An exclamation of surprise escaped Holman's lips. He read every word of Redmond's article and then re-read it. It was an ingenious piece of journalism of the very type that the *Epoch* had so sedulously fostered. For two days the information Xavier had imparted to Redmond had been guarded in the *Sphere* office while the men waited for further facts and, then, there came a night when the watchers were rewarded. Holman was seen leaving his house in his automobile and McQuade was absent and no one could or would tell where either had gone. On his original facts and this corroborative coincidence Redmond had builded, and it was a tribute to that shrewd deduction which plays such a large part in the journalism of today, that even Holman, trained to it as he was, could not tell how much was known in the *Sphere* office and how much merely speculation. Redmond's slight facts occupied two columns in the telling: two columns and not a word that lacked interest.

Holman was annoyed that his relations with McQuade should be brought publicly into question but he persuaded himself that his well-remembered attacks on the Boss would discredit the *Sphere's* article. Confident that McQuade had not betrayed him, although for the first minute suspicion had sent his imagination in that direction, Holman reached the conclusion that some reporter of the *Sphere* had seen him and McQuade the night be-

fore on their way out of the city and had fabricated the rest. This supposition was supported by the fact that the article mentioned neither the place nor the time of the conference, stating broadly that the candidate and the Boss had met and that negotiations for the nomination were progressing between them.

In any event Holman was prepared to make a categorical denial of the report. He read the article through again carefully and, then, leaving his breakfast untasted, telephoned to the *Epoch* office. Early as it was, Rief-snider, the city editor, was at his desk and it was to him that Holman gave instructions.

"Have you seen this morning's *Sphere*?" he asked. The response was presumably in the affirmative for he continued: "I want a denial published of the absurd report of a meeting between myself and Mr. McQuade. Have you paper there? Well, take this down. Head the denial:

ANOTHER 'SPHERE' LIE

AFTER SLEEPING PEACEFULLY THE EPOCH'S
DAILY IMITATOR NOW HAS UNEASY
DREAMS

"Have you got that? Well, then, here's the text:

"With enterprise that would be commendable, if it were not misdirected, the *Sphere* this morning has endeavored to treat its readers to a political sensation by publishing an absurd story of an alleged meeting between Mr. David Holman and Mr. Jeremiah McQuade. The article is so flimsy that it would fail to convince even the

sleepiest of the few remaining readers of the *Sphere*. It is a tissue of lies not even well put together. In the case of any other paper it would be charitable to suppose that it had been imposed upon by a reporter suffering from an over-heated imagination, but the *Sphere's* many weak efforts to foist upon the public fiction in the guise of news, make it certain that this grotesque canard was hatched, fed and carefully trained in the *Sphere* office."

Holman waited a moment before he directed Rief-snider to read over the denial to him.

"That's all right," he said. "Now put that at the top of a column on the first page under a small heading and double-lead it."

Holman left the telephone satisfied with his denial. It touched the *Sphere* in vulnerable parts. He looked at his watch. It was half past eight o'clock. He could not present himself at Miss Stowers' home for at least two hours. The delay fretted him and he welcomed the arrival of Mendell with letters brought from the office. Holman went over them hurriedly. Most of the letters were assurances of support from men whose names were strange to him, obscure in their mediocrity, but as potent with their single vote as the most famous of men. He gave them to Mendell to answer. Not one such assurance was ever ignored.

His letters disposed of, Holman took from a drawer in his desk a complete list of delegates and alternates. He went over it carefully and, now, before the name of every man from New York he placed a cross. It was useless to revise his totals; the figures were registered in his mind indelibly.

At a quarter past ten he sent a servant to the nearby garage to order his automobile at once and, in a few minutes the man returned in the machine. Holman, made impetuous by anticipated pleasure, came hastily down the steps from the library eager for his interview with Harriet Stowers. Opening the front door he almost ran

into Wade Forney. Holman observed the blood-shot eyes, the pallor of the face, the hair carefully combed back from the temples, with the furrows made by the comb still clearly defined.

"I beg pardon, Senator," he greeted, apologizing for his precipitation. "I was in a hurry. Sorry I can't ask you in; I am on my way to keep an engagement. Was it anything important?"

"Yes; something devilishly important to *you*." The last two words were emphasized with such sinister significance that Holman looked sharply at Forney to make sure he was sober.

"Won't it keep?" he asked.

"No."

"Will it take long?"

"Not necessarily." Something new and ominous in the politician's tone decided Holman.

"Come in," he said and held open the door for his visitor. He led the way into the small reception room.

"Take a seat." It was a command rather than an invitation. "Now what is it?"

"You and Jerry McQuade had a conference last night at the Chapel." Forney challenged.

"Oh, ho!" Holman struck back. "So it was you who gave the story to the *Sphere*."

"I haven't read any story. I haven't seen the *Sphere*," Forney answered. Undoubtedly he told the truth.

"What do you know about any conference?" Holman demanded, as if the politician's knowledge were a confession of guilt.

"I know everything about it."

"How?"

"Never mind that; that's got nothing to do with it. I know that you and Jerry McQuade met at the Chapel last night and," Mr. Forney's voice dropped to a whisper, "you gave him a cheque for one million dollars."

A suspicion of McQuade's treachery rushed in upon

Holman but he dismissed it instantly as improbable and Forney's next words assured him that McQuade had not told of their pact.

"You and Jerry McQuade," said the former Senator, "can hold your conferences as often as you damn please"—Forney added the oath to commit himself irrevocably to a policy of aggression—"but you needn't try to leave me out. You've promised me the senatorship and he's as good as promised it to me and, if you were acting on the square, you would have told me that you two were getting together."

He had risen and had become so threatening that Holman quietly assured himself that his revolver lay under his hand. Forney was trembling and perspiration beaded his flaccid face.

"Supposing that we *have* met in conference," Holman began tentatively. "What then?"

"Oh! there's no use *supposing*," Forney retorted volleying the words until they seemed to rattle. "You needn't *suppose*; I *know*. You and Jerry McQuade were at the Chapel in an upstairs room selling out the whole convention. I know every word you two said."

As clearly as a flash of lightning reveals near objects there came to Holman the knowledge of his betrayer. The completeness of Senator Forney's last boast had disclosed her to him. Mag Reardon had been the eavesdropper; Mag Reardon had told. How she had overheard their conversation Holman did not stop to inquire. Mentally he execrated McQuade for having chosen her place for their meeting. But what concerned him most was that the knowledge of every detail of their conversation was possessed by Wade Forney. He could make public a circumstantial account of the bargain for the New York delegation which would be convincing. It could not be denied as he had denied the vague story in the *Sphere* for Forney, as a former senator, carried sufficient public respect to gain credence in spite of such

denials. The probable effect of a categorical accusation of buying and selling delegates *en bloc*, loomed large and hideous before Holman's mind, now busy in formulating a temporizing policy. Forney's next words left no room to doubt his ultimate intention.

"Holman, you know what the papers would do with this. You wouldn't dare show your face in this city during convention week, and, if I should put this information in the hands of Emmet O'Malley, you and Jerry McQuade would have to join the others in Europe for your health. O'Malley's no fool and he wants Abner J. Heyward for president. And, what's more, he isn't afraid of you or McQuade or anybody else."

It was a new danger. Holman had not foreseen it. It held a hundred-fold more potency for harm than newspaper denunciations. O'Malley would act quickly, fearlessly; Holman had no doubt of that. Come what might Forney must not leave the house until he was made mute beyond all possibility of betrayal.

Holman's voice was as level as if the man who threatened him had been discussing the canals on Mars, as he asked: "Well, Senator Forney, what do you propose?"

"I want just this, Holman; just what you have promised; the senatorship."

It was the old Wade Forney of the square jaw, demanding instead of begging. At the request Holman laughed pleasantly and laid a friendly hand on the Senator's shoulder.

"Well, I've promised;" he said, "you have my word. Forney," he added in a tone of reproach, "you don't trust your real friends. Surely, at this time, Mr. McQuade and I may meet in secret without informing any one else, even you."

"Meet as much as you like," Senator Forney replied with an oath. "But I am going to be sure that I'll not be thrown out when you've got all you want without me."

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"You have a distrustful nature, my dear Forney," Holman smiled his embracing smile.

"Distrustful be damned," ripped out the politician. "I want a letter, a letter saying, in black and white, that, if you get the nomination, you'll give me your support for the senatorship."

There was no hesitation on Holman's part. It was a dilemma infinitely to be preferred to disclosures by the former Senator.

"You shall have it, my friend," he smiled, "and gladly."

"And I want it now."

Holman still smiled but he did not venture again to reproach his visitor for his lack of faith.

"Very well," he replied a little sadly. "I am sorry, Senator, you think it is necessary, but you shall have it just as soon as I can write it."

One might have supposed as Holman left the room on his way to the library that his mission was of the pleasantest, so eagerly did he go.

Forney, left alone, sank low in his chair. The pictures and the gilt and tapestried furniture failed to interest him. His head fell forward on his breast and drops of perspiration stood out thickly upon his forehead. He breathed heavily and his heart fluttered from weakness. The excitement that had sustained him was past and reaction had set in. He closed his eyes. Half-reclining in his chair, as if asleep, Senator Forney presented a pathetic appearance. He was as pitiable as some gnarled and unlovely tree upon which a fatal blight has fallen, but which still opposes its weakened, diseased trunk to the storm. He got himself together with difficulty as Holman re-entered the room. He read the letter the candidate had written and its fulsome praise and unequivocal assurances revived his drooping strength.

"I appreciate this, Holman," he quavered. Holman watched the man trembling. He wondered how it hap-

pened that such weaklings sometimes obtained the whip-hand and became the drivers instead of the driven in the race for position, forcing stronger men to do their bidding. Holman saw the light of pleasure illumine the faded eyes as Forney read the letter for the second time. The man was safe now, he reasoned, but nevertheless, he must make assurance doubly sure.

"You are wrong to distrust your friends, Forney," he remonstrated, placing his hand again on the politician's shoulder. "I had not thought of giving you this letter: I had not for a moment considered it necessary between us. But I had thought of another thing: of asking a favor." Forney looked up hazily. "Fernald," continued Holman, gazing appreciatively into the upturned eyes, "Fernald, who first persuaded me to become a candidate, will make the speech nominating me before the convention. I had intended asking you to make the principal seconding speech, if you will do me the honor. I was going to write to you about it today."

It needed no more to gain Forney's complete confidence. The former Senator beamed his delight. He already saw himself climbing back into prominence and power. It was his ability as an orator, that had, in the beginning, gained him McQuade's admiration and, in consequence, the senatorship. He was never so proud and pleased as when his voice was ringing out the words that called his party to battle.

"It shall be my pleasure, sir," he said grandly. "It shall be the effort of my life."

When he had left the house Wade Forney's over-filled heart turned toward the woman who had so conspicuously aided him. He would go to her and express his gratitude. She had received too many curses; too few caresses. In the future he would treat her more kindly. She alone was gentle and tender when he was ill and weak. A tear of maudlin sentimentality rolled down his flabby cheek.

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With undisguised impatience Holman waited for Mr. Forney to disappear. He cursed the politician's slow gait that kept him from the object of his desires; the morning was filled with obstacles that held him back from Harriet Stowers. This last had been a pressing business that would not brook delay, but it was happily ended and nothing else now, however important, should stand in the way of his seeing her. He bade the chauffeur drive fast and they dodged in and out among the vehicles that crowded the avenue, threading their swift way to Harriet Stowers' home.

Holman rang the bell eagerly. To the man who opened the door he said:—

"Please tell Miss Stowers that I am here."

"Miss Stowers is not in the city, sir," the servant answered impassively.

"Not in the city!" It was like a knell.

"Miss Stowers left last evening for Tuxedo with Mrs. Kirkland. She said she expected to be gone for a couple of weeks."

"At Tuxedo?" Holman uttered the words mechanically.

"Yes, sir; at Mrs. Kirkland's villa."

Holman, turning from the door, took his place again in the automobile and directed the driver to take him to the *Epoch* office. Whatever triumphs the rest of the day might hold it would seem empty to him.

CHAPTER XXV

ON THE HEIGHTS

Holman found at the office, as usual, a multitude of affairs claiming his attention. But he put all else aside and, warning Xavier that, on no account, was he to be disturbed, wrote to Harriet Stowers the note he had formulated during his ride downtown. His wish to have her in New York was so urgent that he might have telegraphed, but impetuosity was not one of his characteristics and he preferred to avoid all risk of appearing in unseemly haste.

"I heard today at your home," Holman wrote, "that you had left the city unexpectedly. No other disappointment that I can now recall has cut so keenly for I had come to rely upon your presence during this time of crucial work and to find in your words an encouragement I sorely need. To have you near has seemed to me half the battle won; to hear your praise has been to make the prize worth winning.

"Is it possible for you to return? Every hour seems urgent. I can not tell you how much I have grown to count on you; I myself, had not realized it. Can you not return at once and add to the already great debt of my gratitude?"

He signed his name without the usual meaningful protestation of sincerity or deference.

The day passed monotonously for Holman. Fernald in a state of exalted enthusiasm, his head among the stars, was busy with his nominating speech and read some of its periods to the candidate but the praise did not serve to banish the disappointment of the morning. Riefsnider came in several times in connection with important news

stories and the managing editor bobbed in and out with a bumble-bee show of pressing business. Holman was glad when the details were ended and he could take his ride in the park. As he rose to leave his eye fell upon the bronze paper knife with the ivory face of the fisher-boy on the handle. He took it up and gazed into the far-seeing eyes of the child tenderly. He would not give him up.

It was late at night when a telegram was brought to Holman in his Tenth street home. He tore open the envelope hoping it might be from her. The message read:

Shall leave tomorrow morning, Friday, on
train arriving New York eleven fifteen.

H. S.

He read and re-read it. How often a formal telegram, its real meaning hidden from strangers' eyes under which it passes, holds for him who reads with the understanding of the heart that suggestion of sentiment which is dearer than its expression. From the slight fact that Harriet had signed the despatch simply with her initials Holman gained infinite comfort. It argued an intimacy that brought delight to him and her quick response to his wishes lent assurance to him that she would aid his plans. He would keep that telegram forever. In the days to come when the rougher journey to success had been made and he could set himself to the serener enjoyment of life with Harriet Stowers he would cherish that formal type-written thing as a souvenir of hard desperate fighting to reach his goal. Sentiment played small part in David Holman's nature but tonight he gave himself over to it with Harriet's telegram in his hand, crowning her with his love, his imagination dwelling upon the position they would occupy together. They should go hand in hand, men bowing to his will, acknowledging his mastery and

women envious of her as of a princess—more than princess; no queen should have a station more exalted than that he would make for Harriet Stowers. She should follow the inclinations of her heart and men and women should worship her for the great good she did. But dearer to him than that was the high place she would hold among those of the great world. Her beauty, already famous, would become a matter of history like the charm of Dolly Madison and she should have with it all, wealth to dazzle those accustomed their lives long to brilliance. No woman in the world was more worthy of it, no lady in the land could bring to him more honor. After the lights were out Holman lay with open eyes, fashioning this waking dream, glad that sleep did not come to end the pleasant contemplation. If this were love then he had denied himself too long and yet he found satisfaction that it had not been born into his life before.

Holman waited in Jersey City the next morning, impatient for Harriet to arrive. Her train was nearly an hour late but, at last, it pulled slowly into the station and with a delight he could scarcely restrain, he saw her descend the steps to the platform.

Harriet came toward him with that pleased smile of grateful recognition and greeting which is the reward of those who waste dull hours in crowded railway stations waiting to welcome friends. To Holman she had never appeared more exquisite. She was dressed in a tailor suit of dark blue cloth, the severity of her costume emphasizing the delicacy of her beauty. Her hat was one of those modish travesties that barbaric milliners are forever foisting upon uncomplaining woman-kind and Holman knew that it was the extreme of an absurd fashion but, above her waving hair like some fantastic crown, far from appearing grotesque, it seemed and, indeed, was becoming to her serious, refined face. She was followed by a maid dressed in black who rested a

travelling bag on the platform as Miss Stowers and Holman exchanged greetings.

"My aunt was scandalized by my running away," Harriet informed him gleefully, "but I loathe Tuxedo and—" she paused and looked up at him in comradeship—"Your note read as if you really wanted me to come."

"If a man's gratitude can mollify your aunt," he assured her, "she may behold in me the most grateful. It was good of you to come and—" There was no trace of vanity in his confidence—"I felt you would not fail me."

On the way to her home as his car rolled at a snail's pace through the congested streets he outlined to her the changed political situation which made his nomination certain. In smiles and in words of praise and pleasure she reflected his enthusiasm.

When they arrived at the house Harriet insisted that Holman remain for luncheon. They ate alone for Mr. Stowers belonged to that class of wealthy New Yorkers who do not permit themselves the luxury of a leisurely mid-day meal at home. He, with others, had formed the habit of lunching hastily at a downtown club. Holman, regarding Harriet across the small table, watched her with the pleasure her near presence never failed to inspire. In the old silver, in the richness of the linen, in the small standards that held a single rose, he saw her governing touch. His imagination pictured her at state dinners, amid the brilliance of official life.

When they had left the table and were in the seclusion of the comfortable library she told him she had read with amusement his caustic denial of the absurd report regarding an interview with McQuade. He smiled tolerantly.

"McQuade, the much abused," Holman confided to her, "has made a virtue of necessity and has asked to enlist himself under my flag. He has come over to my ship, realizing that his own was likely to be caught in the tidal wave."

"I am so glad," Harriet said. "Mr. McQuade can not be quite as black, then, as he has been painted."

"We must not despise aid from whatever source and, besides, who can tell but that McQuade may see, at last, the error of his ways. 'While the light holds out to burn,' you know."

Holman rose suddenly and came to the girl's side. His voice was deep and low when he spoke again and Harriet felt the emotion quivering in his words.

"This has made my nomination certain," he began, "but I could not enjoy my victory when you were not here to share it."

Harriet's faint pink, the pink of a pearl, deepened into rose and her heart beat fast as she saw the moment she had longed for hang trembling for an instant as a crystal drop trembles before it falls. She could not raise her eyes to his lest in them he should see too quickly the love she felt.

"If the People should bestow upon me higher honors than they have bestowed," Holman went on, "if they should give to me the highest honor of all, it would lose half of its meaning if you could not share it with me. I want to know, when I am in the arena, fighting the battles I shall have to fight, that the crown of laurel will not be for myself alone. I wish to be sustained by the thought that whatever I gain will be gained for you. As I have expressed to you before, your presence has been an inspiration to me. Your encouragement has made the toil worth the while. Will you share that labor forever with me and make the rewards of that labor doubly dear?"

He bent closer to her and took her unresisting hand in his.

"Harriet," he whispered, "together we may reach the heights where it is always sunshine. Will you be my wife?"

So this was her moment. This was the boundary

mark between the two eternities of her past and her future where had been set up a jeweled monument toward which her steps had been directed and upon which she would now look back forever during the rest of her life's journey.

She could not speak in answer to his question. Instead, unaccustomed tears filled her eyes and, trembling, she bowed her head upon his breast. He put his arms tenderly round her and, bending, kissed her on the temple.

"Harriet," he murmured, his voice like music.

She drew back from him, smiling. Her pride in him and in his love illumined her soul's altar with a thousand fires and their light shone through her eyes. Her commander was there before her, this tall, dark conqueror whose life had been so different from her own and never had he seemed more like a king than now with his soul aflame at last, his arms stretched out toward her, his deep eyes impassioned, his strong face softened by an expression of entreaty. In her rapt gaze he was more even than a conqueror, he was a hero, a demigod who had fought his way through the wickedness and greed that had encompassed him to the heights of which he had spoken where it would be always sunshine.

She came toward his out-stretched arms, taking his strong hands in her own and looking deep into his eyes.

"My King," she whispered and could say no more.

Again his arms enfolded her and with a tenderness he had never shown before and that came to him now strangely as a part of the passion that possessed him he stroked the soft gold of her hair. "My Queen," he breathed as he bent above her. "My Queen," he whispered again. "All that my strength may win; all the conquests I may gain in life shall be your kingdom."

In that precious, jewelled moment David Holman stood close to Heaven, his soul's salvation nearly won. The thought of self passed him as the starless hour of

night passes into day; ambition meant a finer, nobler thing; he was caught up on the wings of the pure spirit of the woman who loved him and removed from the touch of sordid desires, purified by her purity, ennobled by his love of her.

If in that instant he had been forced to choose between her and all other possessions the world had to offer; power, place, wealth, dominion, he would have chosen the woman he held in his arms, relinquishing all else that had been dear to him without a thought.

"Harriet, Harriet!" He spoke her name as if it were a prayer.

Reverently he raised her face until the deep soft eyes of brown, brimming with tears of joy's exquisite pain, looked mistily into his own.

"David, my king," she murmured as their lips met.

With the security of those whose faith is without flaw she rested in the shelter his arms made for her. The strength of her soul found its perfect happiness in reposing on his strength. She relied on his staunch self-reliance without fear, with no doubt to trouble her. And for David Holman with added strength called into being by the burden of her trust, regeneration was then possible. His love transmuted the baser metal of his soul, the steel and iron of his nature, into gold and for the interval that neither spoke, while he held her silently with no other wish than to protect her forever from the world he measured close to her ideal. Love had come to him for the first time in his austere, lonely, selfish life, a hard and merciless life that had left him hard and merciless; for the first time he was lifted upward by a good woman's hand.

There came to him clearly a knowledge of the priceless gift that Harriet had made and a great fear seized him lest he should lose it.

"Forever and forever?" he asked her hoarsely.

"Forever and forever."

"'For better or for worse?'" He tried to smile but the fear he felt made his effort futile.

"'For better or for worse,'" she answered solemnly, her eyes lifted, her gentle face hallowed with a radiant tenderness that shone through from the revealed soul.

Afterward Holman tried to discuss plans for their future but the dross of worldly things obtruded in spite of his endeavors to hide it with the gloss of high ideals.

"You may have to face defeat," he told her, smiling confidently at her as she sat by his side in a window recess, the bright sunlight falling softly through the curtains.

"That would make no difference to me," Harriet answered. "For your sake and for the sake of the People I wish success, but we could find happiness just as great in failure."

But his soul that had been through fire shuddered as he thought in her presence of the struggles of men. A cloud seemed to pass over the sun and the room grew darker to him and a shadow fell upon her face. He fled from the ugly sentiments that the remembrance of hidden affairs evoked.

Holman took her hand gently in his. "Let us not talk of other things now," he said. "Let us talk only of you. I feel that nothing else is worth discussing."

Harriet's laugh echoed her content. "And of you; only of you and of me. It shall be our golden hour."

"No, not of me, Harriet," he implored. "Another day but not now; I am unworthy."

The pressure of her hand voiced her confident denial.

"No; only of you," he insisted.

But the ugly thoughts crept back into his mind and at last Holman rose to leave unwilling that they should sully the fair picture of the girl who had pledged her life to him. He wished to escape from thoughts of the world and to be alone where he could think only of her.

"I shall not work today," he said to Harriet in leaving.

taking her hand in farewell and gazing at her with the admiration that had so thrilled her with pride in him when he had bent to kiss her. "I shall go out into the country and do nothing all this blessed day but think of you. Matters may press at the office but they may wait; they must stand aside for you. I had hoped to remain here until your father came that I might speak to him of you but even that must be put off until tomorrow."

"It shall be our day. I, too, shall keep it for you," she echoed. Again he pressed his lips lightly against the soft gold of her hair where it waved above the temple. And appearing taller even than he was, stronger and more erect, he walked down the stairs and out of the house into the sunshine of the June afternoon.

True to his resolve he did not communicate with his house or his office. He put away all thoughts of his older life and under the thick-leaved trees, riding through valleys gently sloping to a lake or river or pausing on the crest of hills where the country rolled away for miles on either side he kept the day sacred to Harriet Stowers.

CHAPTER XXVI

UNDER THE YOKE AGAIN

It was night when Holman arrived at his home. Reluctantly, as if he were returning against his will to the scene of his successful struggles toward a goal he had forgotten for a day, he entered the house. A servant met him at the door.

"There is a man in the reception room to see you, sir," the servant whispered.

"To see me, at this hour?"

"Yes, sir, he has a letter. He has been here twice before and would leave no message. He came again two hours ago and has been waiting ever since."

Holman walked briskly into the reception room and saw Martin Brennan, who had risen at the sound of voices in the hall, standing, hat in hand, in the center of the room. Without a word the Slugger advanced and thrust forward a letter. Holman tore open the envelope and walking to a light that jutted from the wall read McQuade's message.

"Call me up on the telephone as soon as you get this," was the brief command. "I have been trying all day to get you. Important. Call me up whatever hour you arrive."

Holman raised his eyes from the paper to the man who had not moved since he delivered the note.

"All right," he nodded. The Slugger, with a short jerk of the head as if the thick neck stubbornly refused to bow, left the room. To the servant who let him out of the house into the street he accorded a muttered: "Good night."

Holman stood for several minutes motionless with McQuade's note in his hand, the light near him giving

a pallor to his face and changing the granite gray eyes to black. The things he had tried so hard to forget were brought back to him, forced upon him. The ambition that in his exaltation had been dwarfed to paltriness loomed large again; strong and red and dominant it stood between him and the milder, more beautiful vision of the day. It came to him to refuse this request of the Boss. He would have been glad to have had an end to his dealings with McQuade and certain delegates. But he had gone too far now to retrace his steps. He was too deeply engaged in the battle. There could be no retreat. He threw back his shoulders, lifted his square chin higher and with a toss of his large head, as if to rid himself of doubt, left the room. Ascending the stairs to his library slowly, he closed the door and telephoned to McQuade.

Throughout the evening the Boss had waited for the call. "Who gave that story to the *Sphere*?" he demanded abruptly, an accusation thundering in his tone, for as Holman had at first suspected him so he had suspected Holman wondering vaguely if a plot lay beneath the story he had read.

"No one, I imagine," Holman's answer was as cold and even as the question had been hot and irritating.

"No one!" came the incredulous retort. "Then how did they get it?"

"Dreamed it, I suppose. Didn't you read my denial?"

"Yes; but they must have known."

"I think not. Some reporter may have seen us leaving town and imagined the rest. Or maybe some one saw your man here. He comes too often."

"You think they could dream all that?"

"Yes. Read it through again."

"I've read it through often enough."

"Apparently not. There are no facts. They've seen your man here, perhaps, and guessed at the rest. I suppose you denied it."

"Of course. I am glad *you* did. I've been trying to get hold of you all day." The Boss, ready to strike but assured by Holman's confidence, was more pacific.

"I've been out of town."

"Well, stick to your denial. Hold tight."

"I shall; don't worry about me but there's some one else you can worry about."

"Who's that?"

"Forney."

"Wade Forney? Why?"

"He knows."

There was a deep guttural rumble that sounded over the wire like a distant roar. "Knows? Forney? How?" came the explosive questions.

"It's easy to guess," answered Holman coldly. "Your good friend, the woman who runs the place, told him."

There was another deep explosion. "Told? Mag Rear-don? I'll break up her business."

"I wish you would," Holman's resentment of McQuade's selection of the Chapel returned. "You vouched for her, I remember."

McQuade in the pressure of other considerations, did not reply directly to the remark. "I'll take care of her," he said, his voice grim and ominous. "How about Forney?"

Holman affected lightness. "Oh, he'll be all right," he answered. "To use your phrase, I've taken care of him."

"How?"

"I can't tell you now; I'll write you about it."

"You are sure of him?"

"Perfectly."

"That's good business. I'll get him tonight somewhere and I'll see that he doesn't do any talking."

Holman smiled sneeringly at the Boss's sure mastery over the former Senator. "You needn't trouble. He will keep quiet."

"If he's sober, perhaps," McQuade qualified.

"He'll keep quiet," Holman repeated. McQuade admired the easy confidence that inspired the assurance. Evidently, he argued, Holman had dealt with the crisis in his own way, paying Forney well for his promise of silence, but the Boss was not sure that money could still that babbling tongue if liquor set it wagging.

"I'll see him anyway, and tonight," he said, "and you can bet that he'll be quiet after that."

Again Holman smiled grimly but the smile left his face as lightning vanishes from the sky when he heard the Boss's next question.

"Everything else all right?"

"Yes." Apprehensively Holman waited for what he knew would come.

"How about the girl?"

He could have thrown the telephone from him and smashed it into pieces as the hateful question ran over the wire, hissing in his ear. Had McQuade been there in the room Holman would have struck him and kicked him from the house. He might have killed him, so white-hot was the fire of his indignant wrath. But he held himself in hand. He was of steel again and emotion could not bend him.

"That will be all right, Mr. McQuade," he answered with teeth set. "Goodnight." And, indifferent to the Boss's reply, Holman hung up the receiver.

Holman rose and paced the room, his hands clasped tightly behind his back, his head bent. There was no escape for him; he was caught in his own web. He must continue as he had begun. The zest was gone but, perhaps it would return with the morning. A few hours before and he would have taken delight in crushing Mag Reardon for her treachery; it would have given him pleasure to make of Forney a plaything of only temporary importance; he could have found joy in flinging *his* scorn at McQuade for his easy trust in an untrust-

worthy woman, watching the sparks struck from the rugged Boss's ire. But now they seemed inglorious triumphs that afforded no satisfaction. One large thought brought him some consolation. He ceased to dwell upon the means in looking forward to the end. There was solace in that great, eventual victory. When it was won, he persuaded himself, there would be time enough to think of other things, to devote his attention to the newer ideals love of Harriet Stowers had inspired.

Steeling himself against any other conclusion Holman took up the neglected work of the day. Rapidly he ran through the accumulated messages; quickly he disposed of Mendell's report of matters calling for immediate attention. With his accustomed sure grasp he mastered the minute details of the shifting situation, observing with eagerness how every plan he had laid was carrying straight to his purpose.

It was after midnight and Holman was still absorbed in his work when the telephone bell on his desk rang. He put his ear to the receiver.

"Hello, Holman?" It was the voice of McQuade but now the tone was free from querulousness, ringing with a note of victory.

"Yes," Holman answered.

"I've seen Forney. He told me what you did. It's all right; he's a fool. But we needn't worry about him; drunk or sober he'll keep quiet. You can be perfectly sure of that. And the woman—my friend, as you called her—I've taken care of her. Goodnight."

It was the Boss's final word and this time Holman had no opportunity to respond for no voice answered the slight taunt that he flung into the mouth of the telephone. But McQuade's unwillingness to yield to him even the satisfaction of silencing Forney served to amuse rather than to annoy and Holman soon afterward retired in a more contented frame of mind than he had enjoyed

since McQuade's note had put an end to the day of his greatest happiness.

Before the next day was fairly begun, while yet the streets were deserted and the air seemed white and new, Holman rose and dressed and, going into his library, opened the window and plunged again into his work. With that short night between him and the thoughts of the afternoon before, he found it easier to concentrate his entire attention on immediate affairs. He entered into the labor with the old spirit of conquest new-risen and as consuming as it had ever been. Mendell came to the house after breakfast and Holman gave him the orders for the day sharply, quickly, and listened with unalloyed pleasure to the lieutenant's boastful report of progress. Enjoyment in the conflict returned. It was intoxicating to feel this mastery over men, to know that even those who opposed must bend to his will. Other callers came later and he flattered them or browbeat them as their case demanded. A national committeeman, supposedly friendly to Heyward, went away with Holman's name on his lips, Holman's badge over his heart and Holman's money in his pocket.

As the day wore on Holman went to the office, now become a busy hive of politics, and directed with added energy the small and great affairs awaiting his attention. He had luncheon with the "captain of industry" to whom Harriet Stowers had introduced him and who was carrying out with wisdom, his part of their bargain.

When the afternoon had grown late Holman went to Harriet's home. The day before he had wished it were possible not to see her again until the unclean business of the convention was through with, but as the old plans, cherished so long, thought out so carefully, came again under his hand he willingly made her a part of them. Her love must still serve as a stepping-stone. Their engagement must be made known before the convention to complete his bargain with McQuade, for the stern, reso-

lute, old Boss who in his heart, Holman knew, hated him, might turn at the last moment if the contract were not fulfilled to his liking. An announcement of his engagement to a woman so widely known for her charity and true worth and of a family as prominent as that to which Harriet belonged would silence effectually all gossip. No scandal could live against the fact of his approaching marriage to one so worthy. Zaidee had shown her acceptance of the situation and willingness to remain mute but even if she sought to cause him trouble he was confident of his ability to deal with her and should her complaint become public she would be only the "other woman" of a shadowy, unproved romance that could be discredited and made to appear as the well-nigh baseless fabrication of his enemies. Other public men, seeking high places, had been faced by the women they had cast aside and had turned it to their advantage.

Harriet greeted Holman with a pleasure she made no attempt to hide. For her there had been no falling away from the ideal she had created. Her happiness was in her eyes and on her lips as she smiled up at him when he told her of the day he had spent far from the city, away from men, under the trees and by the side of brooks.

"I read in the papers this morning of your 'mysterious' absence," she laughed in comradeship. "They had you in at least a half-dozen different places meeting as many men."

"It was your day," he interposed.

"And all the time I knew it was my day," she went on, her entire trust showing in her fond glance.

"Now," he said, "we may talk of other things than merely our love. We may plan for the future."

She heard him with eagerness as he presented to her the picture she had already seen. He considered the possibility of defeat but passed it over lightly and dwelt upon the surer prospect of success. With cordial ap-

proval she heard his suggestion that the engagement be announced at once, before the result of the convention was known that it might not seem that he had waited for that, fearing his fate before.

"I told father," Harriet informed Holman. He nodded for her to proceed. "Dear father," she continued, "he has never denied me anything and though I know it will go hard with him to be alone, his heart is glad that I am happy."

As they spoke Mr. Stowers came bustling into the house. He shook hands with Holman with cordial pomposity. In Wall street he had heard that there was no doubt of Holman's nomination and great likelihood of his election. He had heard, too, of the attitude of his friend, Holman's new ally, and he was secretly gratified that his daughter should share in Holman's success. Holman looked down on the little man, at his white thin hair carefully brushed, at the close-cropped side-whiskers forming a white rectangle against his ruddy cheeks and into the sharp brown eyes.

"I am honored, sir," he said with deferential politeness, "that you entrust your daughter to me. I shall try with all the means in my power to guard her happiness."

Harriet came to where the two men were standing and laid her fingers lightly on their clasped hands.

"You two will become great friends and companions," she said, trying to soothe her father's sense of loss and finding her greatest happiness in the thought her wish had inspired.

The three talked together for some time, Mr. Stowers experiencing all the delight of a novice behind the scenes for the first time as Holman outlined to him the political situation. Harriet took small part in the conversation willing that the men should proceed, as they were proceeding, to a future intimacy.

When Mr. Stowers left the house to go to his club, *Holman went with him, pleading business at his office.*

He had accepted Mr. Stowers' invitation to dine at his home in the evening but the conflict of the old ambitions with the newer ideals which began again in Harriet's presence made him desirous of avoiding her alone until after the convention. With her near he could not rid himself of dark misgivings evoking an uneasy contempt for the prize of his desires as he knew that prize to be and of his methods in obtaining it. Until he could meet her with a mind unstained by these reflections he preferred to see her seldom for she only made it the harder for him to go on and it was impossible to turn back.

Holman stood with Mr. Stowers on the pavement beside his automobile.

"May I take you for a run?" Holman asked, "Or may I put you down at your club?"

"Thank you," Mr. Stowers responded, "I was going to my club, if you will be so kind as to drop me there. I should be glad to have you dine with me there some evening soon."

As they moved off another car passed them. In it Holman recognized Mrs. Van Alstyne and young Pemberton. The three men lifted their hats. Holman saw the surprise in Mrs. Van Alstyne's face and he fancied that her bow of recognition to Mr. Stowers included him. It pleased him to think it might be an overture for peace.

On the following day the newspapers contained announcements of Holman's engagement to Miss Stowers. Even the least enterprising of the journals regarded the news as sensational, according it a prominent place among the events of the day. The *Epoch* alone, contented itself with a simple, dignified statement.

"Mr. Montgomery Stowers," the notice read, "announces the engagement of his daughter, Miss Harriet Stowers, to Mr. David Holman. No date has been set for the wedding which will be soon."

CHAPTER XXVII

NEW FRIENDS FOR OLD

Zaidee Sylvestre rose late and had her breakfast of coffee and rolls before she dressed. The habit, acquired when she was at school in Europe, appealed to her luxurious nature and had lingered. It was Sunday morning and on Sundays, and other mornings when she did not ride in the park, she indulged herself by spending that delicious first hour of awakening in idleness. Of late, however, the dozing or day-dreaming she so loved had given place to avid reading of the newspapers. Her relation to one whose name was now in every issue of every paper made interest in the political campaign near and real. Before, such things had been nearly meaningless to her; the movement of the actors in the drama had been unnatural and grotesque as the gesticulations of an orchestra leader appear when one can not hear the music. But, now, it was no longer incomprehensible dumb-show. The participation of Holman and O'Malley had made all the other characters in the play familiar to her and she followed the shifting scenes with eagerness. The morning hour became to her, instead of a period of sleepy repose, a daily stimulant.

Mrs. Sylvestre was thus engaged in reading the papers when she came upon the notice of David Holman's engagement as it appeared, with the formality of authority, in the *Epoch*. She started from her pillows with a little catch of surprise and with dilated eyes read through the meager announcement.

"Dios mio!" she whispered softly as one in stress breathes a prayer for guidance.

Her eyes left the paragraph in the *Epoch* and fell upon Holman's portrait displayed in the *Sphere*. Zaidée spread

open the paper and read the embellished facts. She could not get enough of it. Then she returned again to the *Epoch's* authoritative announcement. It fascinated her to see there, in Holman's own paper, the words that revealed the meaning of his desertion of her. Why, she asked herself, should she now be surprised when her intuition had shown it all to her so clearly weeks before. A tigerish desire for revenge, the feral instinct to destroy, leaped up in her, but it quickly yielded to a willingness that the present course of events should not be altered. She had been drifting gladly to a deeper feeling for O'Malley, not pausing to analyze the sentiment or to ask whither it could lead her. She had closed her eyes to the past and to the unhappy present, content to have the future shape itself as it would. Now, for the first time, she realized how far from its old accustomed paths her heart had wandered. She suddenly became aware through the slight emotion the announcement of Holman's engagement had induced how small a part Holman had held in her recent thoughts and how large was the share of O'Malley. His friendship had become more important to her than the loss of Holman's love. She had met the District Attorney twice lately while riding in the park and from these chance meetings, although their conversation had not returned to the cause of her unhappiness, there had sprung a sort of comradeship. With Zaidee as with so many, there was only a slight and narrow ground of acquaintanceship; one must stand in the intimate enclosure of friendship or remain without the walls. In O'Malley's cordiality she saw the quick sympathy of a loyal friend. He seemed to her as one who stood at the door of her heart as if on guard, never knocking for admission, but waiting, ready for her hour of need, asking nothing, willing to give all. Often she wished that fate had given her when she was a child into the hands of such a man. She would have loved him with a love that should have known no ending.

She thought of O'Malley's many acts and words of kindness; in their meetings he seemed always to consider her without a thought of himself. No, she was not sorry to give up Holman. She was glad to put away her old life forever.

Occupied thus with her own situation Zaidee suddenly remembered, with a pang of sorrow, little Captain. Impulsively she rose and, still in her night-robe, went to the nursery. The child was in a chair by a window. His slender legs were crossed and he was bending over the pictures in a large book he held on his knees. He looked up with a smile of pleasure as his mother entered the room. Idly gazing into the yard from another window was the woman who acted as nurse and governess for the boy, a drawn, hard-faced English woman of early middle age. She raised her shifty, faded eyes as Zaidee approached and left the window quickly, making a pretence of being occupied. The woman did not like Zaidee. She could neither understand nor sympathize with a disposition that lavished affection so tempestuously.

Zaidee knelt by Captain's side and put an arm round him. As she drew him closer to her the boy smiled shyly and ran his small hand through the richness of black hair that fell loosely upon Zaidee's shoulders.

"You are very sweet and very beautiful, Mamacita," he confided. "I love you." He held his lips to hers and Zaidee pressed him against her so tightly that Captain gave a shrill gasp of pain. Alarmed lest she had hurt him, Zaidee released the boy instantly but the little fellow smiled up at his mother bravely to assure her that it was only in play and that he had not suffered.

"Why, Mamacita, you are crying," he exclaimed, catching sight of the tears now falling fast. His hand stole to his mother's. "Are you unhappy?" he asked timidly.

"No, not unhappy, dearest," she answered, "but very, very happy as long as I have you."

"Why, Mamacita! You have me and you have Amigo, too. I know you love Amigo almost as much as you love me." With what innocence children sometimes turn the knife in the wound!

Zaidee caught the boy close to her again. "Would you be happy, dearest, without Amigo; with only me?" Her heart stopped beating as she awaited his answer.

"Is Amigo dead?" His voice was like a whisper, hushed with the awe of children who have lately learned of death. Only that morning the English nurse had impressed upon his bewildered mind the inevitableness of life's tragedy.

"Not dead, beloved," Zaidee sobbed, "but we may never see him again."

"Never see Amigo again!" It was beyond the child's comprehension.

The nurse, attentive to the conversation while she went about the room, paused as she heard the surprising intelligence.

"But you must not grieve, dearest," Zaidee tried to comfort him. "I shall be very close to you and you shall have everything you want. I shall never leave you and we shall be, oh, so happy together."

She kissed him again and again but the boy, unresponding, stared at the carpet dismally. He believed that his Amigo was dead. Yes, that was what had happened; the hideous monster, that had so recently come into his world to frighten him, had carried his Amigo away.

Throughout the day Zaidee brooded over her dismal thoughts. Constantly her perplexed mind reverted to Emmet O'Malley but it was in keeping with the perversity of her nature that now, when it seemed O'Malley's proffered aid might be needed, she shunned the idea of ever appealing to him. While she was still bound to Holman she had delighted to consider the possibility of O'Malley's help; now that she was free she raised

scruples against appearing before him in the light of a petitioner. He should never know from her that she had been cast aside.

As the days passed and O'Malley did not call upon her Zaidee's mood settled into one of self-commiseration, dwelling upon her wrongs but gaining no small satisfaction in the thought that O'Malley, if he but knew of it, would approve of her suffering in silence. She consoled herself with the remembrance of the sympathy he had already shown. Without being aware of it she devoted herself more and more assiduously to her son until she and Captain were by now the best of friends, comrades even, such as he had been with Holman. They drove together often in the park or by the river or went on short motoring excursions; delightful journeys to them both when the poetic soul of the child drank in unconsciously the beauties of the youthful summer and Zaidee by his side, his hand in hers, felt that through her suffering she had gained a friend dearer and better than the one she had lost, her own son.

It was on an afternoon, shortly before the convention was to open, that Zaidee from a window seat saw a cab draw up to the curb and O'Malley descend from it quickly as he always moved, and run up the steps. With an excitement she could hardly control she heard him ring. No imagined pleasure could have stirred her more than the knowledge that Emmet O'Malley was at the door but the coquette in her character which could never be deeply hidden gave her the sudden impulse to escape now that the pursuit she had desired seemed to have begun. He had been deliberate in seeking her out; she would be even slower in meeting his advances.

In whispers she told the maid who came to open the door to say that she was out. Concealed from view in a room only a few feet away from him she heard O'Malley's earnest inquiries. The maid, assigned a part too diffi-

cult for her attainments, stammered hap-hazard answers to his questions. Mrs. Sylvestre was not in. She had no means of knowing when she would return. Was Mrs. Sylvestre out of the city? She might be. Would she be back that evening? Perhaps. Did anyone know? No. Was there any way of communicating with her? No.

O'Malley's questions were exhausted. There was no hope of gaining information from such an intellectual blank. He turned to leave. "Tell Mrs. Sylvestre if she returns this evening," he said, "that I wish to see her on an important matter. I shall probably call again this evening or telephone to her."

Zaidee heard the door close. No sooner had O'Malley's cab driven away than she repented her refusal to see him. Her act of perversity had plunged her back into gloom and soon after, unable to bear the imprisonment of the house, she sought to escape from her tormenting reflections by a ride into the country. So vexed with herself was she that she left the house without seeing Captain, unwilling that he should be a witness to her ill humor but the late-June afternoon was too fair to be clouded by dark thoughts, and, as the car sped over the smooth road into a land of green fields, Zaidee left forebodings and regrets behind. She was glad to have the old disturbing problems settled definitely; there would never be worry again over Holman's lack of warmth; she would not again be chilled by his iciness, as if the more human feelings of the man were extinct through long suppression. It was pleasant to turn from him to the warm staunch sympathy of Emmet O'Malley. Assuredly he was not indifferent to her, indifference was not a part of that buoyant nature that found pleasure in good and cast the spell of his happiness over those near him, even the distressed and heart-sick. And again her thoughts, brighter now for O'Malley's visit than they had been for many weary days, built a future where doubt

could find no entrance. Lengthening shadows brought to Zaidee the realization that it was late. The automobile clock showed her that it was nearly seven. So absorbed in her thoughts had she been that, at first, she discredited the time-piece, but a glance at her watch confirmed the lateness of the hour. She gave the driver directions to return to the city as quickly as possible, but, even at great speed, they could not arrive at her home before nine o'clock. Zaidee no longer heeded the landscape or the day. The colors of sky and field changed; the blue above the western horizon flushed faintly into pink, then deepened into scarlet, then the tint of rose again, melting into purple; then indigo with the stars shining; but the woman, frantic lest she miss Captain's goodnight kiss—she had grown to count upon that—saw nothing of the beauty of the dying day; to her, night fell with the swiftness of a shooting star. She wished she had taken Captain with her, reproaching herself that she had failed to do so.

There were delays at the ferry and in the city streets, so that it was nearly ten o'clock when Zaidee arrived at her home. She found the servants alarmed by her absence. Explaining to them briefly that she had been detained, Zaidee rushed to Captain's room to comfort him if he were still awake, waiting for the usual evening embrace. At the threshold she paused. The room was in darkness. She turned on the electric switch and stood gazing in consternation at the child's bed. It was empty. There was no one in the room.

CHAPTER XXVIII

UNEXPECTED RESULTS OF A SEARCH FOR A LITTLE LOST BOY

Zaidee's scream of apprehension brought the maid quickly to her side. Confusedly, the girl stood under the deluge of questions, sputtering answers as fast as she could. No one had seen the boy or his nurse. The maid and the other servants had believed the child was with Mrs. Sylvestre. The nurse had taken him out a few minutes after Mrs. Sylvestre left and had not returned. The nurse had not said where she was going. The maid had supposed she intended to take the boy for his usual afternoon walk, since Mrs. Sylvestre had driven out alone. That was all; there was nothing more she could tell.

Tragedy looms largest when it first appears. The thought rushed in upon Zaidee that Captain had been killed. She had frightened visions of death in the streets. But, even to her frenzied imagination, there came the reassuring conviction that she must have heard of any accident; the nurse would have brought word or sent a message if she, too, had been hurt. It was unlikely that both of them could have been killed or rendered helpless by any mishap. And from that more hopeful conclusion her mind seized upon a suspicion of Holman. She sent the maid for a cab. The supposition that Holman had taken the child away dried her tears but did not serve to allay her impatience. She could hardly wait at the window until the cab appeared. She met it as it drew up to the curb and directed the driver to go quickly to Holman's house, but, when she arrived there, the house

was dark and no one answered her repeated ringing and knocking. Biting her lips at the delay, she told the man to take her to the *Epoch* office. Excitedly she sought to enter Holman's room. It was locked. He was away, the man on duty told her; he had gone out of the city that afternoon; no one knew where. Zaidee did not believe him. She would have tried to beat the door down had not the remembrance of Emmet O'Malley come to her as a beckoning light. "If there is anything I can do, whatever it may be, you will find me ready and willing," he had said. It was his promise; he would fulfil it. Fortunately, Mr. O'Malley had told her where he lived and she remembered the address. She would go to him and implore his aid in recovering her child. Pride was forgotten. Only to have back little Captain—nothing else in the world mattered now.

Descending the steps from the *Epoch* office, risking a fall through her impetuosity, startling late reporters as she swept by them, Zaidee re-entered the cab and bade the man drive her to Mr. O'Malley's home. It was far uptown. To Zaidee, consumed by a fever of anxiety, the way seemed interminable. A thousand times she reproached herself for having left her house that afternoon. Her heart ate at the bitter poison of vain regret. If—the word prefaced her every thought.

At Mr. O'Malley's home she was again to suffer disappointment. A kindly Irish woman, whose white hair framed the rosy oval of her face, informed Zaidee that Mr. O'Malley was not at home. Zaidee gave a little cry of distress and held her hand against the door frame to steady herself.

"Is it very important, Miss?" The woman bent motherly, sympathetic eyes upon her.

"Very," sobbed Zaidee, "I—I have lost my little boy and Mr. O'Malley——"

"You poor dear," the woman interrupted. "You poor dear; come right in and you can wait for him."

But Zaidee shook her head. "I can not wait," she cried. "I must find him."

The woman hesitated, but Zaidee's distress resolved her doubts. "He told me he was going to his office to work tonight and would probably be there until very late. On no account was I to tell anybody where he was as he didn't want to be disturbed, but a lost little boy, ma'am, sure, he would want to know about that. And he'll help you to find the child if he can, ma'am; that I know."

She gave the downtown address to Zaidee and the long ride back was begun, a dreary ride in which every moment was hateful. Although the woman's words had brought sweet comfort to her and Zaidee now felt more confident of finding little Captain again, her imagination still darted back time and again to some frightful fate that might have befallen the boy. For those unfortunates whose children are stolen or lost, surely that first night of separation must hold their worst agony, when their fears try to pierce the curtain to see where the child lies asleep. As Zaidee passed down Broadway she saw in street-cars and on foot the careless, amused throngs on their way homeward. Laughing faces detached themselves from the mass and were imprinted for a moment on her mind to be effaced as suddenly as moving pictures disappear from the screen. She wondered how anyone in the world could laugh.

When at length she arrived at the District Attorney's office, far downtown, Zaidee heard with delight the assurance of the care-taker of the building that Mr. O'Malley had not yet left. She climbed the five flights of stairs scarcely pausing for breath on the landings. Her steps echoed through the dimly-lighted, deserted corridors. At the end of a long hall on the fifth floor she saw brightly-illuminated rooms and on the doors, in arched letters of black against the ground glass, were the words: District Attorney. Zaidee knocked at the first door she came to.

"Come in," a gruff voice demanded. She entered and saw an attendant in uniform. To his inquiring scowl she explained briefly that she had come to see Mr. O'Malley on business of urgent importance.

"Can't do it," the man answered. "Can't no one see him; he's left orders not to be disturbed."

"Oh, I must see him." Zaidee pleaded.

"Them's my orders." The man was one of those poor servants who delight to rule.

"Tell Mr. O'Malley that Mrs. Sylvestre is here." Something in Zaidee's tone caused the attendant to rise and, with a surly grumble, disappear into another office. He was back again in a moment but, preceding him, with a hand outstretched and a smile that conveyed both welcome and solicitude, was Mr. O'Malley.

"A fortunate coincidence," he said, "for, late as it is, I was almost on the point of sending to see if you were at your home."

The statement which he had expected would surprise her made no impression upon Zaidee. It is doubtful if she heard it.

"Mr. O'Malley, help me," she cried, the anguish of the last few hours of doubt and disappointment finding expression in her plea. "My child, my little boy, is lost!"

"Lost? In what way? How do you mean?" It was the questioning of the lawyer eager to aid, quick to get at the facts.

"I don't know—stolen!" Sweeping aside her own debating she voiced her conviction in the single word.

"Stolen!" In O'Malley's blue eyes there was a flash of lightning that meant danger to those who had wrought the harm.

Tempestuously Zaidee poured out the story of her discovery of Captain's disappearance and, with no other prefatory explanation, leaped to her suspicion of David Holman. The attendant in his corner abandoned his pretence of examining the newspaper that lay upon

his desk, his curiosity excited beyond his ability to conceal it and, with his gaze riveted on the woman, listened to her accusations. O'Malley's sharp eyes shadowed by a frown observed the man's absorbed attention. He lifted his hand abruptly.

"Wait a moment, please, Mrs. Sylvestre," he said gently. "Don't say any more here, please; we are not alone. I beg you not to worry or excite yourself too much. If your boy is alive we shall get him for you, and it is most unlikely that he has been hurt or you would have heard of it before this." He took out his watch. "If anything had happened it would have been reported before six o'clock. Yes, you would surely have had word of it. Be sure we shall find your boy."

Zaidee looked into his eyes gratefully.

"Have you notified the police?" O'Malley asked.

She shook her head in negation.

"I shall have them informed at once and if the boy has already been found you will have him inside of half an hour."

To the attendant, now again busy with his paper, O'Malley gave instructions to telephone to the police, his description of little Captain as he remembered him, from the one brief vision he had had of the child, supplemented by the mother's tearful information. The formal questions answered, Zaidee would have plunged again into a rehearsal of her suspicions of Holman but O'Malley interrupted.

"Wait a moment, please, Mrs. Sylvestre," he cautioned a second time. "It is better not to discuss the case too freely here. Please come this way." As they were leaving the room he paused to give a direction to the attendant. "Tell Mason to come to me at once," he ordered.

O'Malley conducted Zaidee to another office, opening the door and standing aside as he motioned to her to enter. When they were alone O'Malley closed the door

and came to her side. He spoke solemnly and she was aware that he was repressing his emotions.

"If David Holman has taken your child," he said, the blue eyes narrowing, his lips tight drawn cutting off each word sharply, "he shall be forced to give him back to you. I shall not let him persecute you in this manner. Rest assured, Mrs. Sylvestre, that we shall restore your boy to you."

"Mr. O'Malley," Zaidee sobbed. She held out her hand and swayed as if about to fall.

O'Malley caught her hand in his strong grasp. "There, there, Mrs. Sylvestre," he pleaded, "I know you are brave; be brave now, it will all come right."

He led her to a chair and sat down before a desk near her. There was a sharp knock at the door.

"Come in," O'Malley commanded.

The door opened and a square-shouldered man, thick-jowled, his mouth hidden beneath a heavy black moustache, entered, casting a swift glance at Zaidee as he came to the District Attorney's chair. She had dried her tears and sat wondering and expectant.

"Mason," Mr. O'Malley said, "this is Mrs. Sylvestre who was formerly Zaidee Gonzales." The man bowed awkwardly but looked at Zaidee squarely and shrewdly. "She has a communication to make to me now and she may be of service to us later. On no account let your man leave the other room before I return."

Mason withdrew with a crisp "All right, sir," and O'Malley with a smile of almost parental tenderness, turned to Zaidee with: "Now then?"

"What!" she cried, "you knew my name was Zaidee Gonzales?"

"Yes."

"You know my history?"

"A part of it."

"Then you know the part David Holman has played in my life?"

"In a measure. You need tell me no more, Mrs. Sylvestre, than you consider necessary. You have been greatly troubled; you should spare yourself further distress." He spoke softly as one anxious to shield her from suffering.

But the flood-gates of Zaidee's pent emotion were unloosed and, beginning with Captain's disappearance, she poured forth the sorrows that for weeks had been augmenting. She went back to her early life in Arizona and told of her mother and her father and of Holman. O'Malley would have stopped her, but she swept on to later days when Holman, finding she stood in the way of his ambition, had flung her aside for Harriet Stowers. The District Attorney interposed words of comfort. Occasionally, when the thought of Holman's perfidy was uppermost in his mind, his brows contracted and he did not trust himself to speak.

Zaidee's tears fell softly during her recital. She did not spare herself. She had flaunted the world's opinion and, now, did not seek to hide her humiliation. The man to whom she was confessing her shame might despise her; that was the bitterest of all her bitter thoughts, but even it could not deter her. At the conclusion she lifted her eyes to O'Malley and begged him to force Holman to give back her son. O'Malley's blue eyes met hers in tender pity. "You poor, unprotected child," he said as she again raised her hands to her face and sobbed violently. "How much you must have suffered. But be brave; no harm shall befall you now."

When Zaidee had calmed herself, O'Malley tried to divert her from thoughts of little Captain. "I am glad you came, Mrs. Sylvestre. I told you I was on the point of sending for you. I called at your home this afternoon but, unfortunately, you were out. I have just heard something important that concerns you. Did you ever hear of Manuel Cabrera or a man named Cordova?"

Zaidee was startled by the unexpected question. "A

man named Cordova killed my father," she answered.

O'Malley nodded. "And Manuel Cabrera?"

Zaidee's memory sped back to almost forgotten conversations between her father and her mother. "Cabrera? Yes. Manuel Cabrera was once my father's friend, when they were both young. I have heard my father speak of Manuel Cabrera but I have never seen him."

The District Attorney's face brightened at her corroboration. "The man who actually shot your father died a few weeks ago, a wretched outcast, Mrs. Sylvestre. Almost with his dying breath he made a confession in which he accused David Holman of inspiring him to commit the murder that Holman might obtain complete possession of the Salvador mine. That confession was made to your father's friend, Manuel Cabrera, who is in my office with a detective at this moment. He came here when he heard that David Holman would be a candidate for the presidential nomination to be made by the convention which is about to meet here. His sole motive he says, and I believe him, is to avenge himself on Holman for causing the murder of his friend. I wanted you here to convince myself that the man is telling the truth. I was debating whether or not to send for you when, almost as if summoned, you came. Although I no longer doubt his honesty, may I ask you to talk with this Cabrera to make sure that he is what he says he is?"

Zaidee's tears had ceased at the beginning of the District Attorney's revelations. She listened to him with wonder written on her face. Even with her hate still high she could not believe Holman guilty of such treachery.

"We shall soon know about your son," continued Mr. O'Malley. "I shall hear from the police in a few moments but I agree with you in thinking that the solution lies with David Holman and, you see, our newly-acquired information will undoubtedly prove useful in inducing

him to return the boy if he should at first refuse. Meanwhile, will you come with me?"

Mr. O'Malley escorted Zaidee into the room she had first entered and they passed on into the District Attorney's private office where two men awaited them. One was Mason, the detective; the other was introduced to Zaidee as Manuel Cabrera.

"So you were my father's friend?" she asked him in Spanish.

"Dios mio!" he exclaimed. "You are Zaidee Sylvestre's child; you are as beautiful as your mother!"

The rough old miner, grizzled and brown and wrinkled, his skin dried to parchment by the blistering suns of Arizona, wept as he spoke to Zaidee. Brokenly he told her of his friendship for her father and of their life together in the mountains before Gonzales fell in with David Holman and, little by little, he came to speak of his hopeless love for her mother who had favored his dearest friend.

It was an hour after midnight when the District Attorney brought the meeting to an end. He left Cabrera in charge of two detectives who had come to the office at his request. To Mason he gave instructions to have David Holman's house in West Tenth street watched night and day. Inquiry had disclosed no accident to a child or a nurse and O'Malley accepted Zaidee's hypothesis that Holman knew where the boy was hidden.

O'Malley escorted Zaidee to her home. As they drove through the quiet downtown streets he succeeded in stilling her alarms for the child, assuring her that the boy was surely safe and well-cared-for and would soon be in her possession again. Zaidee's soul was shaken with remorse and vain regret. She struggled to keep back the tears and was silent for a long time, but there remained something yet untold in her confession; one page she had hidden to save herself. She was no coward and O'Malley must know the whole truth.

"There is one other thing I did not tell you," she began slowly.

"And do not," he urged, "unless it is really essential."

"You should know. There is no reason I should spare myself. My name is not Sylvestre; I was not married; it is my mother's name and my boy, Captain, the child who has been stolen——" she sobbed and buried her face in her hands. "David Holman is his father."

O'Malley's lips faltered and tears stood in his eyes. He took her hands and pulled them gently from her face.

"There, there, don't cry so," he said with infinite tenderness. "There was no use telling me. I guessed your secret and your sorrow long ago."

He released her hands and looked through the wide glass cab-window out upon the deserted street.

"You poor, friendless, little girl," he sighed. He thought of the wreck Holman had made of her soul until he could no longer conceal his fierce hatred of the man who, in wounding her, had dealt his own heart a heavy blow. He thought of Holman's lies about this girl who had been his ward—lies told to shield his own black guilt—and O'Malley's anger leaped to his lips.

"God knows," he cried, "a man's heart must be wholly bad to do what he has done. He took you, who never knew a mother's tender care, who never had a father's strong protection, brotherless, sisterless, alone and a child, and traded on the innocence of your heart, the unselfishness of your devotion. Good God, that he could have done such a thing and still live; that he should never have paused to consider what you might have become but for his degrading touch. He must have seen, he must have known how honest and trustful and true you were; he must have known how strong and fearless was your love and yet he cast this aside and took from you who were a child, your woman's gift and gave you nothing in return. You poor, pitiful, friendless little girl. As

God is my judge, if there is a way to punish him I shall make him suffer for what he has done."

The fury of his anger frightened Zaidee. She caught sight of his face as they passed under an electric light. It was aflame with passion, the eyes gazing steadily into the night, the teeth set, the brows drawn almost together. Fear that some harm might come to him crept over her and she laid a hand upon his.

"Don't, for my sake," she begged.

"What," he cried, "would you protect him even now?"

"There is no bringing back the past," she urged.

"What has been done can't be undone."

"No," he muttered, his voice trembling with emotion. "There's no undoing it. Good God, that's the worst of it."

"I must take my share of the blame," she confessed. "He was not alone guilty; I was a wilful, heedless girl. I was bad. Only—" she sought some extenuating plea, "only I never thought of a time like this."

"He must have seen; he must have known," O'Malley repeated. The cry was wrung from him: "Your heart is not the only one that he has wrecked."

She grasped at his meaning, her soul uplifted by the thought that it conveyed, her agony made more exquisite by the hope it offered and took away. Her hand, resting upon his, trembled. She knew no fear for herself but fear for him possessed her and brokenly she urged him away from the vengeance that consumed him as a fire.

"For my sake," she pleaded again. "Don't seek to punish him."

"For your sake!" he demanded aroused by a newer thought, "It can't be that you love him still!"

"No," she said softly "I do not love him. I can never love him again."

Tears fell as she made the renunciation. O'Malley caught her hand.

"Then why," he cried, "why shouldn't he be punished?"

"He is so strong, so powerful," she faltered. "He is so remorseless to his enemies. He crushes those who oppose him."

O'Malley laughed mirthlessly. "He crushes women and children and weak men, perhaps," he said scornfully, "but I shall find some way to reach him, some way to make him suffer as he has made you suffer."

They were silent, Zaidee oppressed by apprehension, O'Malley trying to subdue his hate that he might think calmly of a way to avenge the woman by his side. At last he turned toward her and looked into her eyes.

"You have been very brave to say what you have said," he began, anger gone from his voice and in its place a comforting tenderness. "Can you be braver still?" Zaidee answered him with a look of perfect confidence. "Will you permit me to do as I consider best, to repeat your pitiful story when I wish, trusting to me to shield you in so far as I may, as I would shield my daughter or my wife? Will you give me that permission?"

"You may do as you see fit," she answered. "You have my absolute trust."

He raised her hand to his lips. "It shall not be betrayed," he said.

The cab stopped at the door of the Madison avenue house and O'Malley helped Zaidee to descend. As the door opened she held out her hand.

"God bless you," she said.

O'Malley tried to smile but the effort was a sorry one. There was no laughter in his heart.

"Try not to worry," he counselled. "Remember, I have your confidence."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE LITTLE LOST BOY ALMOST LOSES HOPE

Little Captain's first night away from home was spent in a small, cheap and not over-clean hotel a good stone's throw from Brooklyn's Borough Hall. There was only one redeeming feature about it, Captain decided: the windows looked out upon the wonderful elevated road with its fascinating trains and long after the nurse was snoring he lay awake by her side listening to the swift rush of the trains in the night, vaguely alarmed, wondering why he was there and why the nurse had not taken him home. He wondered, too, why he should have been to his Uncle David's house when his Uncle David was dead and why, when no one came to the door, he should have been brought to this strange place by the nurse in such evident haste. Her explanations did not satisfy him.

"Your Mamma has gone away for a little while," she had told him. "I'll take you with me now to a nice place and then tomorrow we'll go to your Uncle David's again. He will be there then." She was fooling him, he feared, as she had fooled him about other things, for had not she told him that when a person was dead they couldn't talk or be seen any more? And where had his Mamacita gone? Was she dead, too? He wanted so much to be brave as his Amigo had always told him to be but it was so lonely there with just the nurse and he thought he must cry a little before he went to sleep. If only his Amigo were there he would understand. So he wept softly to himself, choking back the sobs that he might not disturb the nurse at his side and hiding his head in his arms lest even in the dark the unmanly

tears should be seen. Gradually the shudders that swept over the frail little body grew farther and farther apart and, at last, still thinking of his mother, he fell asleep.

Holman, returning the next morning to his home, learned from his trusted man-servant of the visits of Zaidee and the nurse.

"You told me about Mrs. Sylvestre, sir; that I wasn't to open the door to her on no account, but you hadn't said nothing, sir, about the little boy and the nurse that used to come with him so I didn't open the door to them either, though the woman appeared most anxious."

"You did quite right, quite right," commended Holman. He was in splendid humor. However skeptical Zaidee might be of the assurances she had received at the office Holman had really been out of the city and only he and one other knew where he had been. He had fashioned his first plan for those greater days when, supreme in his own party, he should need secret allies in the camp of the enemy, and, like all the other plans he had made of late, it had succeeded admirably. Once in the White House with all the patronage of the Chief Executive to support and strengthen his mastery he had nothing to fear from his own party. Only the opposition could turn him out and it was with the most powerful as well as the most unscrupulous leader of the opposition that his business had been. The bargaining had lasted well into the night but when Holman rode away early the next morning he was as fresh and cheerful and bright as the June day. Departing from the leader's home in Germantown he smiled as he recalled some of the sardonic jests of the politician.

Holman at one stage of the conversation had attempted to expound his own patriotic intentions. "The people of the country," he had said, "the common people, are its strength. They have been denied true representation and it is my belief that they should have it."

But the gray old man had only waved a thin crooked

finger slowly before his nose and lowered the lid of one eye. "Let's leave the people out," had been his comment. "They've been left out so long they won't mind it during your administrations."

Holman's gratified ear caught the significant plural. One couldn't argue with such a misanthropic, wily, old diplomatist. "You're a cynic, Senator," was all he could answer. "Washington's a bad place for a man's belief in his fellow men."

"Yes; Washington or New York or, sometimes, even right here in Germantown." Something like a twinkle lightened up the white wrinkled face.

So it had all been arranged pleasantly, with some humor even and not even Mendell could affect Holman's excellent mood when, ascending the stairs and pondering on the visits of Zaidee and the nurse, the candidate found his lieutenant fairly exuding zeal and bubbling with the story of Zaidee's midnight descent upon the *Epoch* office.

These were the crowding and the crowning days of Holman's life and here it was the very day before the convention opened but he threw off the harness of work with a light heart and, giving orders, the execution of which would keep Mendell and a corps of stenographers busy for the rest of the day, Holman left the house and was driven to Harriet Stowers' home.

She was waiting to receive him. In these later days she rarely went out anywhere lest she should miss seeing him when he ran away from the pressure of political engagements for the relief and delight of a few minutes with her. They went together to Claremont for luncheon, unchaperoned; she took a positive pleasure in defying Mrs. Grundy with him. On the river the sunlight lay bright as a mirror. Ferryboats panted on their way from shore to shore and shrill, puffing tugs quarreled noisily for right of way. Harriet was in love with the day, hot as it was, but for almost the first time Holman's

mood failed to find her in harmony. She had never before seen him exhibit vanity; now he spoke of his success as a personal achievement; at times he was perilously near the braggart in his display of confidence and in his contempt for his opponents. He spoke of his enemies in a tone of raillery new to her and unpleasing.

"I've shown them tricks in their own game," he said and the phrase gave him such satisfaction that he repeated it. "In the West, in the old days, if a man got caught with marked cards we shot him; here you must mark the cards yourself or ring in your own deck."

It jarred upon her to hear him discuss his ambitions and his missions in the language of the gambler. For a moment he appeared to her—she would have died rather than admit it—frivolous and vulgar and into her eyes or, it may have been, into the drooping corners of her delicate, sensitive mouth there crept the old look of spiritual weariness that had been banished by her friendship with David Holman.

When he proposed a short run into the Bronx she pleaded the heat of the day as an excuse for declining.

"I don't believe you're a bit glad that it's all over and that I've finally won, Harriet," he said.

Instantly she reassured him. "Yes, I am," she avowed. "You know I am." She looked frankly into his eyes. The light of pride in himself and in her made his dark features glow. She had never seen a stronger, handsomer face. "Your success is my success," she went on. "Your life is my life." It pleased her to commit herself the more irrevocably after that transitory, treasonable thought. "Why shouldn't I be glad and proud and happy? You know how proud I am of you always."

She insisted on returning to her home, however, and said goodbye to Holman at the door. "I mustn't take up too much of your time these valuable days," was her excuse for not asking him in.

It was still early in the afternoon when Holman re-

gained his house. Mendell was at his work downtown; the house was dark and cool and quiet. It promised to be one of those afternoons, rare, indeed, of late, when he could be alone, but the promise went unfulfilled for hardly had he seated himself comfortably in his library when the servant came to the door.

"I beg pardon, but the same woman, sir, with the little boy is ringing. Shall I let her go away as before, sir? She's most persistent. She won't leave off ringing."

Holman had put by indifferently the problem of the two visits of the day before but now his curiosity was again aroused.

"It's not Mrs. Sylvestre?" he made sure.

"Oh, no, sir; the other one."

He would discover the object of her visits. "Let her come in. Have her go into the drawing room. Ask her what she wants."

The man went on his mission, returning quickly. "She says it's about the little boy, sir. He wants to see you."

Had the woman been even shrewder than she was she could have made no other appeal so sure of success. At Holman's command she came up to the library leading Captain who, at the sight of Holman, hung back as in the presence of an engulfing mystery for the terrifying figure of Death, he reasoned, must be somewhere near and would presently make its awful appearance.

"Well, Captain," Holman remonstrated, holding out his arms in welcome. The gesture was too much for the child. Bravely he put aside the fear that lay upon his heart and, with a cry, ran forward to find himself caught in his Amigo's strong, familiar clasp. He placed his small arms round Holman's neck and sobbed pitifully.

"Heigho! What's up!" Holman comforted the boy. He was strangely moved by Captain's demonstration and looked sharply at the woman for an explanation.

"If you only knew, sir," she whined, the humility of the professional dependent in her attitude and voice.

"If you only knew how he's been taking on for you. He's always thinking of you and asking after you, sir. Aren't you, dearie?" Captain's only answer was a sob.

"Does Mrs. Sylvestre know you've come here?"

Under that glance the woman was afraid to lie. She spoke boldly. "That she don't, sir. Fancy her letting me come; not she! But I knew, sir, how much you thought of the little boy, and him talking of you always as he does, that I just brought him here without asking of her; I brought him here to you, sir, which if I do say it myself, is where he should be, the poor dear!"

Holman held the child to him tightly. He could feel the tears upon the warm wet cheek pressed against his own.

"Did you really want to see me, Captain?" he asked.

There was a valiant effort to stop the sobbing but it was a very, very little boy and the sobs were very, very big, the kind that won't stop. "Yes, Amigo; oh-h, so much," came in muffled syllables from the man's shoulder.

"That's why I brought him here," repeated the nurse insinuatingly. She said nothing of having kept the child away from his mother. She stood ready to deny it if Holman accused her but either he took it for granted that these two visits were merely incidents of afternoon walks or, suspecting the truth, did not care to press the woman too far. He kissed the boy tenderly and it did much to compensate Captain for his trials, for his Amigo's kisses, he knew, were bestowed only on ever-to-be-remembered occasions; he could count such occasions if he tried; it was an appropriate ending to the remarkable, inexplicable happenings of the last twenty-four hours.

Presently Holman took the boy's arms from about his neck. He tickled him roughly, man-fashion, in the ribs. "So you wanted to see me, did you?" he demanded. "Very well, sir, you shall come with me some day to live. How would that suit you?" Captain smiled wanly. Holman put him down upon the floor. "All right, Cap-

tain; I make you that promise. There's my hand on it." The child's hand fell into the man's limply. "In a little while, not so many days now, you can come and live with me and I'll take you out in the country, where a boy should be, and you shall have a horse, even a calico pony like they have in the circuses if you wish. But not now, Captain; Amigo is very busy and can't play. In a few days, though. You can wait; eh, young man?"

Captain nodded his head lifelessly; he would bear this new disappointment like a man.

A hard, desperate glitter came into the woman's shifty eyes. "Couldn't you take him now, sir?" she asked eagerly. "I've worked so hard to get him here. Maybe, I couldn't" she stammered for a word "couldn't get him here again, sir."

Holman interpreted it as a demand for money. "Thank you very much," he said. "I appreciate it." He took bills from his pocket and handed them to her, more money than she had ever possessed at one time before in all her cramped, miserable, penurious life. He wanted her for a friend; she would be useful later.

"Can't you keep him now?" The woman's shifting glance sought many corners as if she were seeking avenues of escape. She had not reckoned upon the disappointment of yesterday or upon Holman's refusal.

"No, not now; a little later. You can bring the boy then and I shall pay you even better for your pains." He turned to the child. "Goodbye, Captain." He caught the boy up in his arms and again kissed him. "Be a fine brave little man." He put him down and half pushed the child and the woman to the door. "Bring him again," he said to the woman. "Bring him again when I get back to the city. I'm going away in a few days but not for long. Bring him in then and——" He slipped more money into her willing hand—"be good to him, very good to him always."

Once out upon the street the woman made her plans

quickly. She could not hope for another opportunity of delivering Captain to Holman if she went back to Mrs. Sylvestre now. There was no way to explain the overnight absence and she did not dare confront the child's mother. She would return to the small hotel in Brooklyn for the night and the next day she would take the boy to Perth Amboy. She knew a woman who lived there who would not ask questions and who would keep them both until Holman was ready to take the child. As she walked up the avenue to the subway station she looked often behind her with the disquieting impression that she was being followed. She supposed and correctly that search for her had been begun at once when she did not return with the boy but there was no need for her now to fear pursuit or to try to conceal herself as she went on her journey, for Mason, from the District Attorney's office, had seen her enter Holman's house with Captain and when, after several minutes she did not reappear he took his information to his chief, sure that he had run his quarry to earth.

Ten minutes later a messenger was on his way from O'Malley with a note to Zaidee. "Don't worry," the note read. "We have found your child. He is perfectly safe. Your intuition was correct. Please continue to trust me and know that I appreciate the sacrifice you are making. I promise you that within five days you will have your boy."

CHAPTER XXX

A WOMAN'S WAY

New York seemed bent upon making the most of its national convention, the first in many years. As if its cosmopolitan growth had made it lazily indifferent to purely home affairs the giant of the cities had permitted Western enterprise to carry away the honors for so long that the politicians, deciding upon a meeting-place where they might elect standard-bearers, had learned to ignore the metropolis as a matter of course. But New York was making up for the lost years. It lived in a super-heated atmosphere of politics. Everywhere throughout the city the fever of the convention that was to open on the morrow burned high. In homes and offices it spread its contagion. In all public places it made the air fetid and heavy so that, to those only slightly infected, the rest of the world reeled in a delirium of politics.

For many days now hotels, bar-rooms, theaters, Tenderloin resorts, gambling houses, street-railways, garages and livery-stables had been reaping a golden harvest. From far downtown to Harlem and beyond, the coming convention cast its complexion over all. Banners suspended above the streets, stiff, heavy and ungraceful, bore their legends to the hurrying crowds. Lithographs in windows proclaimed favorites. Two faces were most in evidence: the youthful, regular, classic profile of David Holman and the rugged, bearded, thoughtful features of Abner J. Heyward, but Holman's portraits out-numbered those of his Ohio rival by two to one. Venders of buttons, ribbons and badges cried ceaselessly in the streets, and everywhere one saw pro-

claimed, by one or more of these emblems, the allegiance of the wearer. Every one wore these decorations, self-awarded for patriotic service or intention. They were to be remarked gaily coloring the breasts of laborers who rode on surface, subway or elevated cars in the early morning or in the late afternoon, to or from their day's work, and these, almost without exception, bore the portrait of David Holman. Those, better dressed and better cared for who followed them on the way to work and who preceded them on the return home, were not nearly so unanimous in their favoritism, for Heyward's face was to be seen on at least half of the buttons.

Into every phase of life thoughts of the convention entered. The theme of politics absorbed all attention and politics meant, as it so often means, the discussion of personalities. Young and old talked of little else. Conservative age for the most part expressed a distrust of David Holman; radical youth proclaimed him enthusiastically to be the one man with courage enough to fight and brains sufficient to manœuvre against the powerful forces that were destroying the Republic. The newspapers devoted themselves to the approaching convention to such an extent that the news and pictures pertaining to the subject buried all other topics. What the rest of the world was doing—the great world outside of New York—was told in paragraphs on remote pages.

Reporters were feverishly active. There was news in every delegate, and in the friend of every delegate, and this news must be had. There was nothing too unimportant to print; there was need for every item. Columns upon columns must be written between morning and noon; between noon and night; between night and morning.

Riefsnider, at Holman's instance, had deserted the city editor's desk to "handle" the convention. In such a critical time reporters as able as Riefsnider could not be wasted in the office. Redmond was engaged in a sim-

ilar work for the *Sphere*. The two men met in the lobby of a Broadway hotel the day before the convention opened.

"Here's something for you, Bob," greeted Riefsnider. "I shall use it myself if the Chief will let me, and you can take it as straight. David Holman is to be nominated on the second ballot."

Redmond had already heard the report. "I'm afraid you're right Gus," he admitted ruefully. "There seems to be no stopping him. And after next March, I suppose," he added with a laugh, "You'll have a portfolio; what will it be, Gus, State or War?"

Riefsnider smiled. "Fire away, old man, but I'll tell you one thing; I mean to get out of this grind. It will be Washington or some kindly 'furrin shore, the furriner the better'."

"Some, 'ultimate island'," Redmond suggested.

Riefsnider laid his hand on his friend's shoulder. "Bob, this business of being city editor and trying to play politics at the same time has made me think better of your island than I did," he admitted.

The two men separated, borne along by different whirling currents. Into no places had the rushing tide of the convention swept with greater force than into the hotels. Delegates, the bosses who controlled delegates, alternates, friends, hangers-on, prospective office seekers, newspaper men, messengers; all helped to fill lobbies and corridors. Dark men in frock coats fastened only at the second button, drawling, in the accents of the southwest, their adamant opinions; men in headgear varying from narrow-brimmed straw hats, gay with colored bands, to wide, black "Stetsons;" men fussy and important; men quiet and forceful; all clutching latest newspapers; all wearing badges indicative of their right to be where they were, congregated in groups and discussed the business of the nation, some whispering it as though it were a thing that must needs be kept secret,

others proclaiming it loudly with an air of undisputed authority. Pages, shouting names, ran among them as children playing a game. Occasionally in the larger groups a speaker would mount upon a chair and deliver an address. Clerks rang bells. Men greeted each other noisily. Reporters buzzed from one group to another interrupting a speaker in the middle of a sentence to draw him aside and pay him the deference of the great metropolitan press. There were committees innumerable and meetings every hour. Every candidate had headquarters; every state had headquarters, and every headquarters was the sun of a political solar system.

Redmond, pursuing his way steadily to the fountain-source of all, learned that Riefsnider's statement in regard to Holman had not been an empty boast made in his Chief's behalf. It was officially announced by Holman's lieutenants that their candidate would be nominated for president on the second ballot, the first after the vote for favorite sons, that hollow compliment that has served as sarcophagus for many a life-long ambition.

On the morning of the day when the convention was to open every newspaper accepted the situation as surely determined and printed formal programmes of the procedure that would mark Holman's progress to the nomination. The *Epoch* in headlines large and boastful announced the news that the people's candidate would be chosen after one perfunctory, complimentary ballot and that the convention, with the interests of the country, and the party at heart, would proceed without opposition to make the nomination unanimous.

David Holman accorded his first interview in the campaign and it was published with a flourish due its importance in the rival *Sphere*.

"David Holman," the interview began, "yesterday granted an interview to a reporter for the *Sphere*. The article that follows was first submitted to Mr. Holman, at his request, and returned with his approval.

"Although it was officially announced earlier in the day by the managers of his campaign that David Holman would be nominated on the second ballot, and, although those in charge of the interests of the other candidates have practically abandoned hope, Mr. Holman would not admit that any programme regarding his nomination had been decided upon.

"I make no prediction,' he said in answer to a question on this point. 'If the people wish me to bear their colors in this fight for equal privileges, as I have said before, I shall not shirk, whatever my personal wishes or preferences may be.'"

The report quoted at length Mr. Holman's opinion as to what the issues of the campaign should be. Toward the end the article gave the fortunate candidate's plans for the immediate future.

"Whatever the action of the convention may be," Mr. Holman announced, "I shall, immediately after it, take a much needed rest for several weeks. My marriage to Miss Harriet Stowers, the daughter of Mr. Montgomery Stowers, will take place a few days after the convention closes and we shall go away, but where, I am not at liberty to say. But you may be sure that it will be far enough away to escape all politicians."

To millions of people throughout the United States, in every section, the words that told them David Holman was surely to lead the hosts brought a serene joy. Eagerly they read of the triumph of their champion. They went about their day's work with lighter hearts feeling that, at last, they were to claim representation in their own government, a representation promised by the constitution and denied by political bosses. It meant for them regeneration; they were again to assume the stature of men. The forces of evil, the enemies of the republic,

had been overthrown. In their hearts there was no doubt of the result of the election that was to follow the nomination. In that wider field they could hold their own with the smaller but powerful army of greed. David Holman had won his way for them to the standard and, in his hands, it would be followed with unquestioning zeal and devoted sacrifice by the millions of oppressed. A new era was about to dawn when America should be a true democracy.

There were other thousands, but they were not nearly so important, who regarded Holman's sure victory with dismay and to many his success meant bitter heart-breaking disappointment. To Abner Heyward, simple in soul, honest in purpose, thoughtful in endeavor, the triumph of his rival meant the sunset of bright hopes and the long night of defeat. To Heyward's devoted adherents, still rallying loyally round the banner of a lost cause, the end of the struggle meant the withdrawal from public life of one of its few noble and disinterested figures. They loved their candidate for his gentleness and lofty spirit that would not permit him to fight as Holman had fought.

But to one person at least the certainty that David Holman would be nominated, trampling under his heel those who opposed him, victorious as he had always been, proved unbearable. With troubled spirit Zaidee Sylvestre read the confident statements in the *Epoch*. They affronted her. The news took the form of a taunt, arrogant and insolent; nor did it soothe her sore pride to find the *Epoch's* confident assurances confirmed by the reports in other and unfriendly papers. With sinking heart she thought of Emmet O'Malley. Here was his defeat, the humiliating news of it written in large letters by this over-mastering, selfish man who was always victorious. It was as she had feared it would be; Emmet O'Malley had not realized the strength, the cruel indomitable force of the man he had expected to conquer. She pictured O'Malley on this first day of the convention,

there in the great hall, fighting against the inevitable, suffering the bitterness of defeat at the hands of his strong, sure enemy and her heart bled for him.

Had it then been given her to decide Zaidee would have sacrificed her life to aid O'Malley; she would have made the sacrifice willingly, gladly, without regret, for, whatever her faults, she was brave of heart and loyal and, in the great crises of life, unselfish. But in this battle between men she could have no part. She must sit idly by while the man she had grown to hate triumphed over the man she had grown to love.

Swiftly as an inspiration, came to Zaidee the resolve that she would seek out Harriet Stowers and through her, perhaps, strike a blow at David Holman. Until now she had been content that Holman should enjoy his new-found happiness undisturbed as long as he in his turn, did not seek to change the current of her present, happier life. But if O'Malley was to be so easily defeated in this battle of men she would take her part in a war of women. Instinctively she held no high opinion of Harriet Stowers, regarding her and Holman as well-suited to each other, cold, selfish, heartless; but she could strike at Holman's pride and Harriet Stowers should know that to one woman, at least, the man she was so eager to marry was contemptible.

Before the ardor of her revengeful desire could cool, Zaidee had dressed herself and was on her way to Harriet Stowers' home. At the threshold of the white marble house her resolution weakened and she would have turned back had not flight borne the stigma of cowardice. She entered boldly and waited in the small reception room, her anger against Holman still burning with fierce heat fed by her desire for a revenge that would in some measure compensate for O'Malley's defeat.

Miss Stowers came in dressed for the street, her gloves and a parasol in her hand. To Zaidee, blind to Harriet's beauty, she appeared cold and uncompromising.

"The servant told me a lady wished to see me," The implied question seemed a rebuke to Zaidee's over-sensitive ears.

"I forgot my cards," she stammered. "I left home so hurriedly. I am Mrs. Sylvestre."

"Mrs. Sylvestre?" the name evidently bore no significance.

"I called to see you about——" the words failed her for a moment——"about Mr. Holman."

Harriet had motioned her visitor to a seat and was about to take a chair herself, but, at the mention of Holman's name, she changed her purpose and stood rigidly. Her heart fluttered as, intuitively, she realized that her newly-found happiness was threatened.

"Mr. Holman?" she echoed incredulously.

"Yes; David Holman—your engagement to him." Whatever the tragedy might be, it was at hand, but she would not run from it; she would face it bravely.

"You will pardon me, but I do not see, Mrs.—Mrs. Sylvestre I believe you said, how our engagement can possibly concern you."

Harriet's courage had carried her too far; her contempt loosed Zaidee's tongue. Before Harriet by word or gesture could stop her, she had declaimed vehemently her chief accusations against the man who had deserted her. For days she had rehearsed her wrongs and now the accusatory facts were marshalled in such rapid succession that her listener was unable to check her. At the first outburst Harriet held up her hand in warning.

"Stop," she commanded, horror dawning in her brown eyes.

Zaidee, heedless, swept on to new phases of Holman's guilt. She spoke with black eyes flashing, standing erect, dark and tall like some avenging goddess.

"I do not believe it," Harriet cried but in her mind was the remembrance of her aunt's accusation—"a Spanish woman."

"You must believe it," Zaidee retorted. "Whether you wish to or not, you must believe what I say. It is all too well known. Before he became ambitious to be president and to know such people as you he was as defiant of the opinion of society as I was. I did not care. He was enough for me. The rest of the world could do as it wished; only it must let me alone. I did not know it then—I was young and there was no one to tell me any better, but I know now that I was a fool—his fool."

Harriet tried to leave the room but she was brought back by Zaidee's accusation that Holman, since his engagement had been announced, had stolen her child and still kept the boy away from her. For the first time during her story Zaidee's eyes filled with tears. She forgot her desire for revenge in her anxiety for little Captain.

"Won't you make him give back my boy?" she begged. "Keep David Holman if you wish. I would not have him back. Though he begged me, and he is a man who never begged in his life, I would not take him back; I swear to you, by everything I hold holy, I would not. But my boy—my little Captain—"

"Your child? He has taken away your child?" The life had gone out of Harriet's voice. It seemed the dead echo of Zaidee's accusation.

"Yes, my child and his," Zaidee sobbed, "but oh, he has no right to him; he never claimed him before. Now that he is to be president and to live among the people he used to pretend to despise he wishes to be rid of me but seeks to take my boy from me. Oh, if you have a woman's heart, make him give back little Captain."

Harriet's face was ashy white. She did not look at Zaidee or at anything, but stared with unseeing eyes. As Zaidee finished speaking she aroused herself.

"Will you go now?" she asked wearily. "Surely, you can have nothing more to say."

With a bitter impression of defeat Zaidee left the house. She was humiliated; she had come to scorn the woman who had taken Holman from her as one who, after striving, had won a worthless prize, but her anger had vented itself quickly and in the end she had been a suppliant, begging only for her child. There had been no joy of revenge, only passionate sorrow and entreaty but she would not have effaced a moment of her visit. Though the cup had been wormwood she did not regret the draught. In the horror Harriet had shown; in her inability or unwillingness to fight back, apparently crushed beyond the power to resist, Zaidee had seen something of the woman's heart and she believed that, through her, little Captain might be returned.

When her visitor had gone Harriet sank into a chair. Her parasol fell to the floor, her gloves dropped from her hand and remained unheeded where they lay. Life, so sweet to her a small quarter of an hour before, had suddenly become stale. Her nature was not one that gave way easily to tears. Motionless as a statue, her eyes fixed upon the floor, with Zaidee's words re-echoing in her brain, she regarded the shattered fragments of her dream. How long she sat there thus she never afterward knew.

Wearily at last she ascended the stairs to her room. Her vitality seemed suddenly to have left her. She locked the door and, turning, caught sight of herself in the long mirror. The changes that she saw caused her to draw nearer. The lines made by Mrs. Sylvestre's visit were plainly visible. Her eyes had lost color. Her mobile mouth drooped. There were furrows from the corners of the thin, straight nose. She turned and, half-staggering, fell full length upon the bed.

A low groan of pain that was like a wail came from her heart. "Oh, oh," she moaned. "How could he; how could he!"

In anguish she saw the mask lifted from the face of her idol; her demi-god was of the basest clay. All his words and all his protestations were as thin as air, empty and meaningless. Stricken as she was she breathed a prayer of mercy for him. "God pity him," she murmured and only pity was in that heart so noble that it could not shelter hate. How high above other men she had placed the man she loved! How far he had fallen! The thought so stunned her that she could not measure her grief. A numbness stole over her. She could not weep. With dry eyes she thought of what she had lost and silently she lay there, the saddest of all God's creatures—a tearless woman without illusions, robbed of her highest ideal.

If only there were room to doubt the woman's story! But no, even there, her grief turned back upon itself: the woman Holman had so cruelly wronged was nobler than he; she was not a liar. She had been no mere adventuress seeking revenge; she was a mother crying for her lost child. How could he have been so cowardly; he who in her eyes had been so splendid in his courage? How could he who had so professed to love humanity wrong a girl, a child given him to guard? Horror widened her eyes. Then, for the first time, she saw clearly how nearly her soul had been placed in the keeping of such a man and with a shudder of fright and dismay she hid her face in her hands.

"God, God," she pleaded, "what have I done that you should make my punishment so hard? It is too heavy for me to bear. Help me!" The tears so long held back flowed freely now. She cried softly. The lips tender and gentle that had kept themselves free from unkind words throughout her life, trembled and sobs came from them as alone, praying for God's hand to comfort her, she tried to bear bravely the pain that came from her broken heart.

CHAPTER XXXI

ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE

Excitement took possession of the *Epoch* office on the opening day of the convention. Men who had grown gray in dealing with the dynamitical events of the world and whose nerves ordinarily, were in a state of subjection, now betrayed their intense interest in the news that came to the office every second by telegraph, telephone and special messengers. Old reporters who knew how to hide that receptiveness that made them valuable, gave way to their eagerness to know the latest word from the delegates. Young reporters, waiting for assignments and chafing under the hard fate that kept them from the convention hall, ran here and there, resolved to make themselves useful and, in some way, even if in no more exalted capacity than that of messenger, take part in the important history that was being written.

One man alone remained calm. In his inner office, imperturbed as if his name were not on every lip and his public career in the balance, David Holman received reports over a telegraph wire that ran from the room directly to the convention hall. At the other end of the wire was Jacob Mendell. Leaving the routine to others the lieutenant was telegraphing only that which he considered was of peculiar interest to the candidate. In Holman's office a telegraph operator sat in his shirt-sleeves transcribing the messages, handing them, paragraph by paragraph, to the waiting Xavier who laid them on the Chief's desk. Holman passed them on to Fernald or to the managing editor, smiling at their eagerness

and commenting good-humoredly on the stress that had marked the opening day.

Members of the National Committee, in caucus the evening before, had decided, by a small majority, to name for temporary chairman an Eastern senator, opposed to Holman. It was the first gun of his enemies, the opening of the initial skirmish which was to give the victors the advantage of position. It was unimportant in its influence on the result but was to serve as vindication for Holman's opponents.

Mendell telegraphed frantically that there was no hope of a reconsideration of the Committee's decision. The majority of the delegates were opposed to the choice; they favored a Western delegate who had been one of the staunchest of Holman's supporters, but this clear majority was to be over-ruled by the Committee.

Holman read the telegram from Mendell with a smile. He gave the message to Fernald who had left his place as delegate for the purpose of consulting the candidate on the situation.

"Here's what Mendell says about it, Fernald," Holman remarked with a smile. "He appears to be rather excited."

"It's an advantage won by a trick," Fernald declared indignantly.

In the street outside a dense mass of humanity swayed and cheered and shouted as news from the convention was posted on the big bulletin board in front of the *Epoch* building. At every mention of Holman's name the chorus swelled louder. Holman rose and, hidden from view, looked out upon the crowd through the stained glass windows. He called Fernald to his side. Together they watched the moving multitude of men, frenzied with enthusiasm for their champion.

"Fernald," Holman said solemnly, "our politicians have much to learn. They seem to think that such crowds as that out there can be ignored. They have learned a

contempt for the majority that they must now unlearn. These people who have to get their news standing in the street are the real rulers, Fernald, not the men who merely have to read the ticker in comfortable Wall street offices. This action of the Committee is of more importance to the Committee than it is to me."

He turned and walked out into the city room with Fernald at his side. The place had been transformed. Desks had been shifted from their accustomed positions, lights had been re-arranged, and every inch of available space utilized to expedite the work of reporting the great convention. Reporters who could be spared, sub-editors, copy readers and even office boys had been organized into departments. One man, whose white hair belied his youth, sat at the head of the table, as the host at a feast, and edited, as rapidly as it was received, Rief-snider's chief story of the day's developments sent in narrative fashion. Other men took up the work of other reporters, molding them all into harmonious accounts. So contemporaneous were the reports and the events reported, that, often, the announcement that a delegate was speaking was in type and in print in the papers on the streets before the brief speech was ended.

Everywhere there was feverish activity. Orders were bawled in loud voices; men from one end of the room shouted to men at the other end. Copy boys darted from one desk to another. Typewriters clicked unceasingly, hammering out the words so impatiently awaited by the multitudes outside the building, in the street, in offices, in homes, beyond the city, beyond the state, even beyond the country.

Holman delighted in such scenes. They acted upon him as a stimulant strong as wine. He walked now among the working men as calmly as if he were merely one of those unconcerned, curious spectators that every great event brings to a newspaper office: the news-drunkards who grow intoxicated with the sensation of

having the world's pulse for a moment under their thumb. In the presence of their Chief the strain under which the men labored grew more tense. They watched Holman covertly, admiring his cool self-possession when every moment might mean so much to him. The men tried to emulate his splendid reserve. Holman paused with Fernald behind one of the new reporters so engrossed in his work that he was unaware of the presence of his employer. As Holman watched him at work the new reporter came upon, in the dispatch that he was editing, news that startled him. It was a corroboration of Mendell's report that the opposition insisted upon forcing its candidate for temporary chairman on the convention.

"They're going to do it," shouted the new reporter, his eyes bent upon the dispatch before him. "They're going to name Vardell for temporary chairman, in spite of the fact that they're in a minority. If I were the Chief I'm damned if I wouldn't fight!"

A general laugh, nervous and derisive, informed the embarrassed reporter that Holman stood behind him. He blushed furiously, unable to stammer an apology for his presumption in advising the candidate. But Holman laughed heartily at his confusion and rested a hand upon the young man's curly head.

"You heard, Fernald?" he asked. "Well, this boy is right. We'll begin the fight now and show them at the outset that the majority must rule. We prefer peace but we'll let them see that we are prepared for war. We'll fire the first gun." His eyes were sharp as swords' points and his face as hard as steel. "We'll show a few old picturesque figure-heads who've been at the bow so long they think they are essential, who is really running the ship." His expression softened. "My boy, I thank you," he said, patting the young reporter on the shoulder.

Ten minutes later Mendell was carrying instructions to Senator Forney on the floor of the convention and

Fernald was hastening on his way to the hall to take part in the opening battle. Riefsnider's words describing the excitement that resulted soon slipped over the wires, passed quickly through the hands of editors, to be a moment later molded into durable metal on the linotypes, cast upon plates and stamped on the paper that sped as a ribbon of light through the whirring presses. Outside the news-hungry crowds devoured the plain, forceful story of Wade Forney's bold challenge, roared at the opposing minority. The former Senator, reassuming easily his old attitude of command, declared that the delegates, assembled for the express purpose of carrying out the will of the people, would submit to no compromise; the majority would refuse to abide by the choice of the National Committee. The chairman of that Committee, who opened the convention and who was largely responsible for the move inimical to Holman, rapped in vain for order. At last he yielded. The honorable Eastern Senator, who had served his party faithfully and well for many years, was heard to declare that he did not wish the empty honor unless it were the willing gift of a clear majority of the convention. He had been a famous dictator in his day and had laughed at many majorities but now he was humble and meek, desirous only of serving where he was wanted. The Western champion of Holman's cause was placed in nomination. The vote would reveal Holman's strength. It was taken during an intermittent storm of jeers and cheers and hisses. Cat-calls greeted votes cast against Holman's candidate; applause followed each avowal of support. There was no doubt that the New Yorker was the favorite of the thousands of spectators. A threat was made of clearing galleries. The idle boast was a tribute to respect for law for those in the galleries outnumbered those on the floor by ten to one and could easily have asserted their mastery and turned their threatening representatives into the street. Slowly the

balloting proceeded. When all the votes had been counted the honorable Eastern Senator was defeated. The Westerner had a majority of fifty-six votes. The convention's ultimate action was forecast in that result.

Holman read through Riefsnider's account, a duplicate of which he had received, page by page, as it was sent from the noisy hall. He turned from the news to supplementary telegrams from Mendell.

"Wisdom of contest demonstrated," ran one message. "Heyward men are now disheartened. I have heard considerable talk of desertions from their ranks in last half-hour. South Dakota's two delegations will be seated giving a half vote to each delegate, a gain of four votes. Convention about to adjourn for day."

Holman handed Mendell's assuring message to the managing editor.

"Four votes more than we expected," the candidate commented. "We don't need them but no repenting sinner will be turned away." His humor sent a spark into his cold gray eyes.

The managing editor was still reflecting an appreciative smile when Xavier laid a sealed envelope before his employer. Holman recognized the handwriting with a glow of pride. It needed but this to make his victory complete. He tore open the envelope. It was Harriet's note.

"Please come to the house this afternoon as early as possible," she wrote. "I must see you on a matter of the utmost importance."

Perplexed, Holman left the office in the moment of his first victory, to obey Harriet's command.

* * * * *

Irresolutely, as one deprived of the sustaining prop of a definite purpose, David Holman left Harriet Stowers' home and stood hesitatingly on the pavement before her

door. Irresolution and hesitation were strange to him, as unusual as the preoccupation which caused him now to stare without recognition at the driver of his automobile waiting at the curb and, with head bent, walk slowly away.

"Shall I follow you, sir?" the man asked.

Holman came to himself with a start.

"No," he answered gruffly and got into the car. "To the office," he directed, then, changing his mind, bade the man first drive in the park.

Dazed by his dismissal from her life, Holman staggered under a realization of how important Harriet Stowers had become to him. For a moment it seemed to him, as the bitterness of their interview just ended swept back upon him, that it was not worth while going on to the end. Ambition, alone, had become an insufficient incentive. Fresh from victory he had gone unsuspecting to his first defeat and his mind was slow to recover from the shock. What he had just lost he had once considered priceless and the heart was taken out of him for further struggle to obtain prizes that for a time he had considered mean and valueless in comparison.

Harriet's decision had been final. There could be no appeal. She had swept aside his weak excuses disdainfully; his small subterfuges had been of no avail. She had been neither reproachful nor scornful, confessing her mistake coldly. When he had tried to excuse what he had done she had replied without emotion that his life as she now knew it and as it was revealed to her by his admissions, had been at variance with every principle dearest to her and opposed to the high ideals he himself had professed. Marriage with him, she had said, was no longer possible. Holman had seen that she had been weeping. The trace of the tears she had shed and of the suffering she had undergone was clearly visible, but she did not weep as she parted from him forever and there was no anguish in her voice as she made him

know how far removed was his life from hers. Her love, he knew, was as dead as though it had never been. Once he had started to plead but she had looked upon him with such uncomprehending horror that the words had died in his throat and he had stood there silent, awed by her uncomplaining sorrow as one is awed by the voiceless grief that follows in the train of death. Only once and that had been when he was leaving, had she spoken in reproach; then she had bade him restore the child to its distracted mother, rebuking him for inflicting greater suffering upon the woman he had already so grievously wronged. He had protested that the child was not in his keeping. Her incredulity had convinced him that further denial was futile. The matter he knew was incidental to her. He might deny stealing the child but the child itself he could not deny or, if he did, he would not be believed. He had been taken by surprise; there was nothing to be done now but accept her decision.

It was difficult as he rode away from Harriet Stowers' home for Holman to realize that he would never enter it again, more difficult still to grasp that in losing her love forever he had lost the incentive that had become as a mainspring to his life.

As Holman rode on his mind grasped the details of that last interview more clearly than when, in Harriet's presence, he groped blindly for some means to justify himself in her eyes. Zaidee must have told her that Captain had been stolen. What did she mean? It wasn't quite clear. Was the boy still with the nurse? Had Zaidee learned of the nurse's visit to his home and was she merely anticipating what might be? In any event the boy was safe. Did Zaidee intend to go spreading this story about everywhere? It was too late for her to harm him in the convention but might not her accusations affect the election? She must be bought off in some way. After the convention, if she persisted, he

would marry her. It wouldn't be a bad idea; McQuade had advised it: shrewd advice from a shrewd man. Yes, that would be the easiest, surest way out of it. After a while he directed the man to return to the office and his mind took up again the day's affairs. He was far downtown when his thoughts were broken in upon by cheering. A group of workingmen were waving their hats; they were shouting his name.

"Hurrah for Holman," they cried. "Bully for Holman! Give it to 'em! Soak the capitalists!"

He lifted his hat and bowed to them as his automobile passed on quickly down the street. The incident had dispelled doubt. There was no turning away from him such men as these laborers and, after all, it was as he had so often preached, in them lay the real power.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE LITTLE LOST BOY FINDS A FRIEND

There are not many idealists in a national political convention. Occasionally in county or even in state gatherings of the elected delegates of the dominant parties the "new man," the young enthusiast with ideas of his own regarding right and reform, will somehow get by the bosses and smash slates or denounce intrigues until his enthusiasm subsides for lack of encouragement or—for accidents will happen however well regulated the machine may be—he has his way and then a new leader is acclaimed. Such a thing may happen in the smaller more local meetings but the men who are sent to a national convention are too well trained in party discipline to manifest a stubborn individuality. They are chosen from among the professors of practical politics, men who are in the game for profit or their greater glory, men with consciences that, though they may be alert enough in other businesses, in the business of their country have been dulled by the ever-present examples of the men who have succeeded. It is the rule of the game they argue, we must do as the others do. Only the failures in politics are idealists.

The convention that met to nominate David Holman for the presidency differed in no essential from others of its kind; it was neither better nor worse. But there were many of its delegates who opposed Holman honestly, unselfishly because they saw in him a peril to their country, a dictator who, with the reins of government once in his hands might drive headlong into an abyss, and these left the convention hall after the adjournment

of the first short session, worried, oppressed, bitter and revengeful.

There were idealists in plenty among the spectators; men and women and boys with right or wrong ideals and these filed out of the great festooned, garlanded building joyously or grimly as their hopes rested on Holman or Heyward. There was one whose heart was heavier than the others, perhaps because his closer view had made him more certain—Redmond. The reporter gathered together his scattered notes slowly, whistled under his breath the little ghost of a tune without much gaiety in it, drew down his Panama rather needlessly hard over his eyes and was turning away from the now nearly deserted stage when a hand touched his elbow.

"Hello, that you, Mason?" the reporter greeted, startled from his reverie.

"Not so loud," cautioned the detective.

"Hello! What's up?" Redmond was no longer the dreamer; every sense was alert.

"Meet me at the foot of the 'L' steps, Twenty-eighth street station, downtown side, in fifteen minutes," directed the detective, slipping away and again mingling in the crowd of departing delegates.

"Something important, that's sure," reflected the reporter as he took a cigarette from the case, rolling it between the fingers of one hand as he fumbled with the other in his pockets for a match; he could never remember in which pocket he had placed his match-box. "Mason's not the one to be mysterious unless he's got something really big," he mused. "Ten to one it's politics, politics and Emmet O'Malley; something good for O'Malley, too, that's sure or Mason wouldn't be telling it."

The reporter walked briskly along Twenty-eighth street, choosing the shadier side. Although he went quickly Mason was before him at the meeting place and

came out from behind the steps to the Elevated station just as the reporter was crossing Sixth avenue.

"I didn't want to be seen talkin' to you there among the politicians, Bob," he explained, "because, if you use this story the wise ones would be pretty apt to put two and two together and guess where it come from. Let's go into Mickey's." He led the way to and through the side door of the little saloon, famous in the old days of the Tenderloin and still enjoying a certain repute among police and politicians.

A red-haired, heavy-fisted waiter came in. "What'll you have, Bob?" invited the detective but the reporter declined.

"Nothing for me, old man, it's too hot," he explained.

"That's right; it is pretty hot, ain't it?" He turned to the waiter. "Nothing doin', Reddy; only we want a few minutes' talk alone."

Reddy turned the key in the side-door as he withdrew and Mason leaned a little nearer the reporter, speaking in a low voice.

"It's about Holman," he began.

"Thought it would probably be politics," Redmond assented.

"It ain't politics exac'ly, Bob, though I guess you're smart enough to turn it that way if you want an' you know I ain't any fonder of David Holman than you are. I used to think he was probably all right though, when it come to newspapers, till he fired you; that settled him with me. Well, it's about that woman, that Spanish beauty, Mrs. Sylvestre, you know. She's a beauty all right, Bob, an' no mistake. I've seen her. Come to think of it, guess you have, too; yes, I remember your telling me once you had. Well, Holman's stolen her kid."

For a moment Redmond failed to comprehend. "What's that?" he asked.

Mason went into the story of Captain's disappearance. As is the habit of his class he dealt with facts, carefully,

succinctly, avoiding opinion, keeping free from conjecture until he had laid before his hearer all his certain information. "I saw the kid go into the house yesterday with the nurse," he concluded. "Saw them myself. When O'Malley gave me the case he told me to put on it all the men I needed and I've been watchin' Holman's house for the last thirty-six hours, most of the time myself an' yesterday I saw the nurse bring the boy there." He paused, his story finished; then he ventured an opinion. "I guess there's more in it, Bob, than just his keepin' away the kid."

When Redmond parted from the detective his eagerness to be at his office with the news carried him up the steps of the *Elevated* two at a time. He knew what it would mean to the *Sphere*. It was such a story that, in comparison, even the news of the convention would take a secondary place. It was the bombshell awaited in every campaign. Its effect could not be measured. He rested his chin on his hand and gazed out the window. In his cheeks was a red glow, in his eyes slumbering fires as he saw, instead of the buildings opposite and the people waiting at the stations to get on the train, the first page of the *Sphere* for the next morning with his greatest story there in print, big headlines over it and above the text his name. Holman would see his name there, he would know who had written that story, and at the thought Redmond drew a deep breath of satisfaction.

He got out at Park Place and hurried along, stemming the tide that had already set westward. He had crossed City Hall Park when coming toward him, his hand held tightly by a hurrying hard-featured woman, he saw little Captain. Instantly he recognized the child but, too astonished to speak, he permitted the boy and woman to pass and then, wondering, followed them. He could not make it out clearly but instinctively he felt that somewhere there was a flaw in Mason's story or the boy at that hour would not be so far downtown unless—his

mind grasped eagerly at the contingency—he had been to Holman's office. The boy and woman had been coming, however, from the Brooklyn Bridge when he first saw them and the *Epoch* building was in the opposite direction. He would keep them in sight and, if necessary, he would question the woman and the boy. He and Captain used to be good friends when the little fellow came to the *Epoch* office. He followed close behind the two, observing the frightened actions of the woman who at intervals looked back without pausing as if she expected and feared pursuit. Once he quickened his pace and passed them to divert her attention from him. He heard the woman entreating the child to hurry.

"Come along, quick now," she was saying. "We'll soon be where you can rest." The child's feet dragged; he was plainly tired.

Redmond watched them as they made their way to the ferry and a suspicion of the woman induced by her actions, grew stronger. They were entering the ferry-house when he came up to them and placed his hand on Captain's shoulder.

"Hello, Captain," he greeted heartily. "Don't you remember me?"

The reporter's quick eyes saw the sudden look of fright upon the boy's face give way to an expression of pleasure that held in it welcome and something else that he interpreted as hope. The woman tried to draw the child away. It was a false move for it served to arouse more thoroughly the reporter's suspicions and caused him to ignore her as she tried to place herself between him and the child to prevent conversation.

"You remember Mr. Redmond, don't you, Captain?" he repeated. Captain nodded. "What are you doing 'way down here?" the reporter continued.

Instantly the boy's face clouded. "I don't know," he faltered. The woman interposed unpleasantly. "He's with me," she said with some asperity as she started to

take the child away. "Come along; we've no time to lose," she urged. "We'll miss the boat." But Captain held back. The thin, delicately-cut, little lips trembled. "I don't want to go; please I don't want to go," he pleaded.

The woman responded with a more determined effort to drag him after her. "Oh, come along," she commanded roughly but she looked up to see Redmond standing in her path.

"Wait a moment," he said calmly.

"I haven't time," protested the woman. "Let me pass."

"You'll have to wait, just the same," he answered.

"What do you mean?" Her attempt to be indignant carried no force and Redmond made no reply, addressing himself to Captain.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

The child glanced up at him through tears ready to fall. "Please, I don't know," he answered.

"Where have you been?"

Captain pointed in the direction he had come.

"Over the big bridge?"

Captain nodded. The nurse interrupted the questioning. "He's with me," she asserted, but Redmond's observing glance detected that already she had lost much of her assurance. "I'm taking him out in the country," she went on. The warning bell of a ferry rang. Again she attempted to force matters. "He's going with me," she asserted, pulling roughly at Captain's arm.

But Redmond still stood in the path and would not let her pass. "Not unless he wants to," he said firmly. "Do you want to go, Captain?"

In spite of his bravest effort Captain could no longer play the part of a man as his Amigo had ordered him. Down his white cheeks the tears rolled and he placed his hands confidingly in the hand Redmond held dc. to him. "Oh, please, no!" he begged.

"All right, then, you needn't," Redmond consoled him. "Where do you want to go?"

The child was sobbing freely now. "Oh-h! p-p-please," the words came brokenly, "to Mamacita!"

"To your Mamma," echoed the reporter, "I thought as much. Well, brace up now, for I am going to take you there."

Redmond became suddenly aware that the nurse had edged away from them and was trying to escape unseen. Leaving little Captain he went quickly to her side.

"You are not going to leave us," he informed her coolly. "You are coming with me."

The woman's indignation flared up again. "What do you mean? What right have you? How dare—" she began but he cut short her protests.

"No right at all, perhaps, but do you see that policeman, the one there at the entrance for vehicles?" As she looked the man in uniform who had been curiously watching the little group caught Redmond's eye and touched his hand to his cap. "That's the one, the man who saluted. He happens to be a friend of mine. Now if you don't want me to turn you over to him you will go where I say."

After that there was no combativeness left in the frightened woman. "I didn't mean any harm," she whined, ready to beg for mercy but she grew mute again in her search for an opportunity to escape. Without protest she got into the taxi-cab Redmond called and silently helped him with Captain when he lifted the child in after her. Even when he gave the Madison avenue address to the chauffeur she did not speak. On their way uptown the boy rode in Redmond's lap and soon the reporter had learned from Captain and the nurse's confused statements enough of the true story to cause him to direct the man to turn back and drive them to the District Attorney's office.

It was an hour later after the nurse had made a

complete confession in which, even at her own expense, Holman was exonerated and when she had been placed in a cell that O'Malley and Redmond, with little Captain between them, discussed what was next to be done.

"There are two things I want you to promise me, Bob," said the District Attorney.

The reporter smiled a little apprehensively though he answered readily: "Granted; what are they?"

"First, publish nothing whatever about all this."

Redmond made a wry face. "I guessed as much. Can't it be used in some way? It meant a lot to me, you know."

"And by that same token," O'Malley answered, "it meant a lot to me." He paused and looked straight in the reporter's eyes. "I had been expecting to use this to defeat Holman for the nomination. It is the only thing that would have done it."

Redmond gave a low whistle of surprise. "By Jove," he exclaimed, "that is too bad!"

"Yes," assented the District Attorney. "It meant a lot to me, even more that it did to you, Bob, but, since Holman's cleared of it, I should be very sorry if anything were published now."

"All right, it won't be then," agreed Redmond. "What's the other thing you wanted?"

"What did you intend doing with the boy?" O'Malley placed his hand affectionately on Captain's head.

"Taking him up to Mrs. Sylvestre's, of course."

"Then do you mind letting me do that?"

"Why, no; if you want to."

"I do want to. That was the other request I meant to make."

"Well, this one's easier. Go ahead. The affair isn't mine if there's nothing to be printed about it. Goodbye, Captain. You're going back to your mother now."

The little fellow looked up gratefully at his friend.

"Please—I mean thank you," he said, as they shook hands solemnly.

At the door as Redmond was leaving, O'Malley placed a hand on the reporter's shoulder.

"You're a good friend, Bob," he said, "the best friend I've got on Park Row if that means anything to you." It meant much, for O'Malley was a favorite among the men in Printing House Square.

As Redmond walked to his office he wondered why O'Malley should have such a keen desire to take Captain home. He was speculating on this when he heard the tooting of an automobile horn followed by the sound of men cheering. He looked up and saw Holman, smiling and triumphant, bowing to laborers who were shouting the candidate's name.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

For two days the convention plunged and floundered through a wilderness of words driven by David Holman's lash. The telegraph and telephone wires that ran from the convention hall to his office or to his home were as whips which he laid without pity upon the backs of the delegates bound to his service. Reverses served only to make Holman more cruel. With bitterness born of Harriet's renunciation he fought more savagely than he had ever fought before for the prize it needed now no effort to win. He had put human kindness from his heart. The warming sympathy Harriet Stowers had awakened in him was stifled with a resolution sprung from his desire to forget her and all else except the starry ambition that had once been his only goal and from which for a moment he had nearly swerved.

Men marvelled at the mercilessness Holman showed in victory. There was grumbling from those whose souls were fettered to him by venal ties they dared not break. With these particularly Holman was bitterly oppressive; he scourged them when there was no need, crushing them beneath his heavy hand as if for the pure delight of inflicting pain. Fernald, absorbed as he was in his poet's dream of ideals, saw the change in Holman and wondered. He often wondered at the things Holman did but blinded himself to the flaws, believing that time would make the man perfect. And so, now, his brain fed by the ambrosia of the millenium he believed to be near, he persuaded himself that Holman, in spite of his outward calm, a coldness that often appeared superhuman, was feeling the strain of his long labors. Fernald himself during

these exciting days felt at times a weariness he would not confess. His spiritual exaltation seemed more than once to threaten the body as if the nerves, too highly strung, might break.

During the adjusting days when the convention stumbled through a jungle of oratory—wasted days, a cynical observer might have considered them but, apparently, necessary to every national convention, even when the final action is known long in advance—Holman showed his opponents no quarter. He refused, although Mendell, who had no sentimental kindness in his heart, urged it, to give to the minority the satisfaction of the most trivial victory.

"I am the master here, Mr. Mendell," he said harshly. "You and the convention should realize that fact. Apparently you have forgotten it."

Holman permitted argument to no one. To himself, his heart filled with hate, he said: "They must do as I wish blindly. They must act as I dictate without question."

He was the leader, more powerful than he had ever been. All his giant's strength he exerted to bend men to his will. He would drive those who submitted, he would crush those who opposed. He stood at last where he had wished to stand. After years of patient waiting he saw the fulfilment of his dream.

Holman's victory on the opening day had robbed the convention of the stimulating element of doubt as to the result and lethargy marked the succeeding sessions devoted to the routine of organization.

But one night served to roll away every trace of apathy. Indifference disappeared with the magic of a vanishing mist. Long before the doors were thrown open to the public on the morning of the day when the nominations were to be made thousands of curious, excited persons clamored in the streets. Policemen formed them, two abreast, into a line that stretched for blocks and

crawled, serpent-like into the hall, every face bright with expectancy. Although the convention would not be called to order until ten o'clock, spectators were permitted to find places in the galleries and boxes an hour earlier. Within twenty minutes after the doors were opened every seat was taken. The vast, rectangular building, where so many mammoth meetings have been held, never saw a greater crowd packed within its doors. In the interests of public safety the police refused, after the first half-hour, to allow more to enter and shouting mobs surged in the streets venting their disappointed protests. They became threatening and were driven away by force but returned again and several groups, finding bold leaders, endeavored to take by storm some of the smaller entrances to the building.

Inside and outside the atmosphere was electric. Rumors of surprise, of plots, of treachery, of fabulous bribes, of desertions, ran from one to another, like a train of powder, lighted no one knew where. Men tried in vain to trace the rumors to responsible sources. There were persistent assertions that the accusations of bribery would be made openly in speeches before the convention and investigations demanded which might delay the nominations for days, but no one with authority would confess himself the advocate of such perilous procedure.

The convention was to consider its important business at once; there was to be no more dilatoriness. Whatever surprises there were to be would be revealed soon. The farce of parading old favorites or new aspirants to fame was over; the real play, heroic drama or modern tragedy, was to begin. There was ever pending that darkest possibility of all conventions: a bolt. The Conservatives and the Radicals could not agree. The minority was refusing to submit. Staid, old Conservatives who had preached party allegiance to two generations were becoming startlingly radical, threatening to leave the Party, abandoning it to chaos.

But the hour was at hand. There was to be no more pleading of veterans, no more eloquence from young orators of promise. From this morning's opening until the standard-bearer was named it was to be serious business. It was for this that these hundreds of men had gathered together from every state. It was for this day and this hour that, for years past, alliances had been forming, promises solemnly given, appointments made, friendships cultivated, enmities dared. All the schemes of all the politicians of the Party were now in the crucible.

The delegates entered before the hour, spurred to promptness by the knowledge that into any moment might be crowded events that would endure in their effect for years. They went to their accustomed places solemnly. There was no disposition on the part of the spectators to cheer; they were holding their energy in reserve for greater things than the diurnal appearance of favorites. They would cheer later, perhaps, or curse and storm and threaten destruction, but, now, their praise and their approval were alike withheld. Even the chairman's appearance was greeted with only a brief cacophony of hand clapping.

It had been arranged after long wrangling, to proceed to the nominations by an alphabetical roll-call of the states and that one state should not yield its place to another. This plan gave to the Heyward faction whatever advantage might lie in nominating their candidate after Holman's friends had expended their enthusiasm. Senator Forney would have taken from them even this mooted benefit, but the victories of preceding days had so goaded Holman's opponents that the former Senator had been persuaded it might not be wise to drive them further and Holman scorned to consider it an advantage. Every state was to be called so that those who wished to blazon to the world their faith in their favorite sons might have the opportunity. But experience had taught

the necessity for abbreviation and, by agreement entered into by the lieutenants of the several candidates, each speech was to be limited to thirty minutes. All the preliminaries had been settled. There remained nothing now but to nominate the Party's candidate for president.

The chairman, nervous, abrupt, raised his gavel and let it fall heavily. A hum of expectation rose from the packed hive.

"I've never seen as big a crowd in the Garden," Redmond volunteered to Riefsnider, as they sat side by side below the speaker's platform.

"I've never seen as big a crowd anywhere!" Riefsnider answered. "It's like election night in Park Row, if City Hall Park were roofed in."

"Like!" responded Redmond, striving from long habit to add something to a measure already full, "it's like nothing else I ever saw, Gus, but I imagine the Coliseum in the glorious days of Rome might have looked like this when favorite gladiators were in the arena."

"Why do you suppose so many crowded in, when it's all cut and dried?"

"That's just it. They're looking for the unexpected. They are hungry for a sensation."

"No," said Riefsnider. "I think they have come because they want to cheer for David Holman."

The two men stood up in their places to get a larger view. In front of and on a level with them sat the actors in the drama, the hundreds of delegates. The states from which they came were indicated by standards, red letters on light blue backgrounds proclaiming the home of the men clustered round them. In the alphabetical arrangement of the states it so happened that friend and foe often touched elbows. A farmer from the far West sat at the right hand of a broker from Wall street; a Newport cottager representing the majesty of Rhode Island, was next a socialist fire-brand. From some of the states the delegates wore as a uniform

proclaiming their allegiance to a candidate, costumes alike and these, in gray or blue, stood out like checker-board squares from the black and white round them. Riefsnider swept his eye quickly, carefully, over the floor, piercing the remote corners where distance shrunk the figures to midget dimensions.

"I don't believe there's a vacant seat on the floor; every delegate accounted for at the opening," he announced.

Surrounding the arena in which the delegates sat, prepared and stern, above and around them, were flags and banners and streamers of red, white and blue. Galleries, pillars and walls were gaudily decorated. Broad widths of gauzy cloth in the national colors hung in an enormous festoon from the center of the high ceiling and draped, tent-like, above the pit. And between the gaudy colors above and the gaudy colors below were thousands upon thousands of packed and wedged human beings. Faces rose, a living wall, tier upon tier, until those in the highest galleries, peering over the edge, looked, to those far below, like curious beings from another sphere. Women in white leaned from boxes and galleries and here and there were flashes of pink and green and light blue and scarlet. These little detached bits of color from women's hats or dresses, served to confuse the vision, catching the eye and holding it away from the features of those who looked down upon the delegates and on the raised platform where the chairman sat, surrounded by distinguished men of the Party.

From above there poured softly through the gauzy draperies, the light of a summer day. It touched the hundreds of heads bent eagerly forward, forming weird shadows on the averted faces. It rested, as gently as a benediction, on the delegates, shining full and strong upon the features of those who, from time to time, turned their gaze aloft to dwell on the inspiring spectacle surrounding them. The sun played queer freaks with buttons and banners and badges and the shining polls of

the bald, forming high-lights that flashed like little electric sparks, first here and then there, inconstantly, irregularly.

Redmond drew in his breath as he made a last survey of that remarkable scene. "It's all there, Gus," he said to Riefsnider. "There's nothing lacking in the way of stage-setting. If this convention doesn't become historic, it is simply failing in its duty. It certainly should do something out of the ordinary to be deserving of a multitude like that."

Nominations were begun at once. The roll-call sounded like the crack of the starter's pistol. There were cheers for the first speech. The nomination meant nothing; it was the empty compliment of a grateful commonwealth. But on this day every competitor was a possible champion; none could be neglected. Any state might possess the mysterious "dark horse" and, besides, the crowd must find a vent for its pent emotions.

"The people act as if they were crazed with excitement," Redmond commented.

"No: they are merely having fun," Riefsnider confidently assured him. "They are waiting for David Holman."

Mechanically Redmond turned his eyes to the New York delegation and sought Fernald who was to make the nominating speech. The editorial writer's face leaped out from among the rest so clearly that the reporter was startled.

"Lord, Gus, look at Fernald!" he exclaimed.

Fernald's pale face was upturned so that the light fell full upon it. His hair, catching the sunshine, formed a nimbus about his features and he seemed lifted away from the others, etherealized, sublimated.

"He's thinking of his speech," Riefsnider explained. "You can be sure it will be the best thing he has ever done."

From time to time as the roll was called Redmond

looked at the editorial writer. Fernald sat there almost motionless, his eyes gazing beyond the swaying loops of red and white and blue. When the name of New York was called the galleries broke into their wildest applause. Redmond, with his heart in his mouth, saw Senator Forney touch Fernald's shoulder twice before Fernald awoke, as from a trance, rose and walked through the lines of cheering delegates to the stage to nominate his Chief, standing upon the platform, calm and smiling, while the band played and the people shouted a tumultuous welcome to their champion. The chairman rapped for order. His gavel fell on the desk before him as steadily as a trip-hammer, but it pounded many minutes unheard and he who wielded it lost his temper before there was quiet again. Fernald stretched forth his hand toward the chairman in a gesture of forbearance.

"I would not try to stop it," he cried, his voice ringing round and clear. "Let them cheer. They have been stifled too long. Do not stop it. It is the Voice of the People and this day it must be heard!"

At that challenge the deafening roar of the crowd was loosed again. The waves of sound beat upon the walls like surf and flags and handkerchiefs and hats and parasols were waved in a riotous, dazzling mingling of colors. The chairman was powerless. Irascible even in victory, he now chafed with rage to find his commands ignored. Angrily he held up his watch. When his voice could be heard he warned the speaker that the interruptions were counting against him. A storm of jeers and cat-calls and hisses, sounding as venomously as a snake's rattle, greeted the announcement. But Fernald held up his hand and, as if by magic, the storm was stilled.

"I do not need much time," he continued. "What I have to say has been said again and again. And at first you would not hear. It was then, as it is now, the Voice of the People. I have heard it long ago when it was only the whisper of those afraid to speak aloud. I have

heard it when it was a plaintive request for justice, mere justice, but the arrogant Rich, the Little-Great, would not heed. I have heard it; we all have heard it, when, more confidently, it debated the rights of the majority and dared ask the Little-Great, these privileged Dictators, whence they derived their power. And when these Plutocrats were stung to answer, they replied to logic with a sneer. And I have heard it today, and you have heard it, this Voice of the People; you heard it a moment ago. And today it receives its answer from this convention, the answer it has waited for so patiently and so long, through nights of oppression and days of unselfish, unrewarded toil, and that answer must be the answer it expects. The Voice of the People no longer begs; it commands!"

Fernald stood as still as a statue, his right hand, powerful and slender, raised high above his head, while the cheers swept down to and up to and round about him. There was no smile upon his face and the sunlight seemed to wash away all trace of triumph or revenge and leave his countenance gentle and compassionate.

When the shouting died away the speaker's voice was heard again and it might have been that he had been speaking in that crash of sound unheard for he was no longer an avenging prophet threatening oppressors but a philosopher talking of abstract things. There was a new note in his voice, the distant flute-like quality of music played behind the scenes.

"A nation is no greater than its Common People," Fernald was saying. "Though individuals may, for a moment, shine like comets and dazzle with their brilliancy, the nation will fall and crumble and be forgot like ancient Babylonia, if the People live in bondage. The kind of slavery that Abraham Lincoln gave his life to end is neither the only nor the worst form of bondage. There is a commercial slavery that saps the life of a nation more quickly and no less surely than the slavery

of chains and chattelhood. "The glory that was Rome's has passed into a proverb; the night has fallen over Africa's former splendor; Spain, that was once mistress of the world, lies shorn of her purple and with the canker eating at her heart; imperial France was drowned in the blood of her bravest sons. And so must perish soon or late, all Governments where the People are not equal; where the Few grow fat from the sweat of the Many; where Liberty does not exist or is but a name."

Again the applause drowned Fernald's voice. The galleries were working themselves into a fury of enthusiasm over his speech, the delegates who favored Holman encouraging every sign of public appreciation of their candidate. Fernald waited patiently. His eyes were set upon a distant part of the hall as if he saw beyond the walls and, into the homes of the poor he championed. He seemed to have forgotten his surroundings. The black and white mass shouting on all sides of him, the waving gaudy colors, did not disturb his dream. Persons whispered that something was wrong.

Redmond leaned over to Riefsnider. "For God's sake, Gus," he asked, "what's the matter with Fernald? He stands there like one of the old prophets about to be taken up in a chariot of fire."

"Sh," cautioned Riefsnider, "I think the man's ill."

When Fernald spoke again his voice sounded even more remote, but so silent were those who listened that it penetrated every corner of that great hall.

"We have turned over our fair Government to the Privileged Class," Fernald droned in a sort of sing-song, his tone as even as the humming of bees. "We are governed, not by the People, but by the Protected Few. They came first as beggars; they now ride forth as kings. It is they who have forged the chains that bind Labor to the chariot wheels of Greed."

A change came over Fernald's features and he smiled

wearily as a spent soldier might smile who sees a flag of truce.

"But I bring to you one who shall be the David of this Goliath. I bring to you the champion you have chosen; one who, for your sake, has stood alone against the powerful hosts of the oppressors. It is he who will lead you against these Monarchs of Monopoly who are as tyrants in this fair land. He will force them to give back to Labor its stolen birthright; he will restore to the People the sovereignty that these protected Plutocrats have wrested from them; he will bring emancipation to the slaves of Corporate Greed and make them brothers to the kings of earth. I nominate as your champion for President of the United States—*Abner J. Heyward of Ohio!*"

The name fell upon the ears of the convention as a blow that takes away the senses. It was unbelievable. For nearly a full minute men sat as though they had been stunned.

"Holman, you mean David Holman!" It was Wade Forney's raucous voice that ended the sickening pause.

"*Abner J. Heyward of Ohio!*" came in a sing-song monotone from Fernald.

Then the forces of Heyward found tongue. They bellowed back his name exultantly. There was no time to reason. Quickly the leaders embraced the Heaven-brought, unexpected opportunity.

"Heyward! Heyward! Abner J. Heyward!" They shouted in chorus, the rhythmic slogan rising like a song.

"Holman! David Holman!" roared back the mad-dened galleries.

"Heyward! Heyward! Abner J. Heyward!"

"Holman! David Holman!"

"Heyward!"

"Holman!"

Fernald heard the conflicting cries. The daze fell from him and he realized with horror the stupid, incredible

blunder his tongue had made. Some devil had tricked him into that inconceivable error. His mind had held the name of David Holman; his tongue had spoken the name of Abner J. Heyward: Was he mad? he asked himself. Was it possible the trained senses could cheat one in such a manner? He would not submit. He would undo the mistake he had made. Fernald screamed his fury at the yelling mob.

"Holman, I said; David Holman!"

"Heyward, Abner J. Heyward!" rolled back the answer.

"Holman!" he screamed again, "Holman! Holman! I nominated Holman!"

"Heyward! Heyward!"

"Holman!" Fernald's voice rose shrieking above the storm. Clenching his fists he hurled his rage at those leering faces that swam before him. He swayed and would have fallen had not some one caught him. Amid the confusion he was led from the stage by a side exit. If those outstretched hands had reached him they would have torn him to pieces for his fatal blunder.

Senator Forney tried to fight his way to the stage. No one knew his purpose; it might have been to attack Fernald; it might have been to nominate Holman aright. He was seen struggling with hands uplifted, stretched toward his goal. Some tried to hold him back; others pushed him on. Suddenly a wave of purple flooded his face and, as suddenly, it turned deathly white. His hand clasped his head and with a groan, he sank to the floor, tumbling down in a heap as a flimsy building collapses. With little heed the crowd made way for those who bore the former Senator to a sheltered corner. The whisper ran that he was dead but not even the presence of death could still that turbulent mob.

In great explosions there is always a second shock. First comes the dull, low, terrifying rumble: the threat of imprisoned forces about to be loosed to deal death

and ruin. And, then, when the heart is gripped by panic, comes the crash, the second shock that brings with it chaos. In the explosion that threatened to destroy Fernald and, with him, David Holman, the premonitory rumble had been heard in that wild confusion following Fernald's speech. Now, in the portentous interlude before the second shock, a new voice sounded as martial and clear as a bugle. It was the voice of Emmet O'Malley. Men heard him whether they wished or not. Through all the convention he had been silent, the heavy hand of McQuade laid upon his lips. He had waited, determined that a way should be made to say all that lay upon his heart. But, now, sooner than he had hoped, in a way he had not expected, the time had arrived to sound the call to arms. The opportunity had come as the gift of fate and he did not hesitate.

O'Malley rushed to the platform, springing up the steps past bewildered delegates and panic-dulled sergeants-at-arms. The frantic multitude fighting, crying, jeering and swearing in the galleries, and distracted delegates, helpless in an unprecedented contingency, heard his voice trumpeting above the conflict.

"Will you not take warning? Have you not seen the hand of God laid on a wise man's tongue?"

Men ceased their noisy struggles to look at O'Malley, seeking to fathom the meaning of his words. He did not leave them long in doubt.

"You heard what he said about the Voice of the People? It's true. The day has come when you *must* hear. The sun of that day has risen. The People will wait no longer. If this great Party is to preserve its greatness; if its traditions are not to become meaningless legends; if its pledges are to be kept and are not to be empty sounds, you must do the will of the People whose servants and representatives you are."

Quiet fell again over delegates and spectators. The tumult died away to dull echoes. Whither was he lead-

ing? men asked each other. Surely Holman was the choice of the People. In this world, which had so suddenly gone topsy-turvy, was O'Malley now the friend of the man he had before opposed? Spectators and delegates listened while he made his purpose clear.

"Oh, patient People!" apostrophized the speaker. "How you must have suffered that you could, at last, in your hour of triumph, turn to one so unworthy. How galling must have been your yoke that you have blinded yourself to the sins of this man; sins, that, had you wished, you could so easily have seen."

O'Malley with burning words, that went into every corner of the building and fell upon eager ears stripped from Holman the mantle of unselfishness. Facts and arguments that had long lain ready for this use were presented, sharp and clear.

"He is right!" men whispered, "what he says is true."

But O'Malley had by no means finished. His voice continued to sound the charge.

"Have you not seen that his deeds were as false as his words were fair? Have you not heard that his private life was a stain upon his soul?"

"It's a lie!" shouted a voice from the gallery. There was the shuffling sound of a conflict as hands silenced him who had dared to interrupt.

"Let him alone," commanded O'Malley, erect, his head thrown back, his hand outstretched with all the vigor of youth. "Let him hear what I have to say. It is true. But you have not heard the half of his black deeds. He was recreant to the trust placed in him by a dying friend. He took away this friend's daughter and wronged the innocence that was placed in his safe keeping."

There was a gasp, a quick intake of breath, as the multitude heard the accusation.

"There is no baser crime than that," O'Malley continued while the thousands sat listening to his words

so silent that the rumble of wagons in the streets could be heard and the distant clanging of car-bells. "God knows I wish it were not true. But he won the love of this child, a beautiful girl with a mind as pure as a child's and a heart as staunch and true as a woman's, her father dead, unable to save her from this false friend, her mother dead, unable to counsel her, without sister to warn her or brother to avenge her, and wrought upon her the foulest wrong man can wreak on woman."

Again there was a sharp catch of breath in that spell-bound crowd of men and women.

"Coward that he is, false to every noble sentiment that he professed," cried O'Malley, his voice trembling with its burden of contempt and hate, "he betrayed this girl's trust, sacrificing her for his selfish pleasure, just as he stands ready to sacrifice the trusting people of this country to his selfish ambition. Ambition is the one God this man bows to. He pursues the gratification of his lust for power heedless of whom he hurts, stopping at nothing to gain his end. In my office is the affidavit of one who shared the perils of the pioneer at the time when Holman, determined to win success at any cost, was seeking his fortune in the Far West. The man who made that affidavit is a miner and friendless and poor but, I believe, honest and truthful. On his sworn word he accuses David Holman of having proved a traitor to the man who was his partner and his friend, conniving even at murder because that friend stood between him and the millions he now possesses."

O'Malley paused and men turned to each other in wonder. They knew O'Malley too well to believe that such a charge would be made lightly.

"The law," continued the speaker "that safeguards the liberty of the individual, preferring that a hundred guilty should escape rather than that one innocent should be punished may hold of little consequence this old miner's sworn word but I believe that it is true. The man who

makes the charge is here in this city. The story that he tells was the dying confession of a man in Holman's pay."

O'Malley's tone changed. He no longer raised his eyes to the galleries but addressed himself directly to the delegates.

"David Holman has sacrificed everything to ambition, but such ambition that heeds not the rights of others, that rides to its goal over the bodies and souls, the hearts and hopes of humanity must fail in the end. You have been the instruments, wittingly or unwittingly, by which he hopes to conquer. He is using you as he has used others. There has been dark talk of men among you who have sold their honor to his greed. I make no such accusation against any man on hearsay or on the slight ground of gossip. I would believe no such thing of any citizen of this Republic until it was proved in a court of law. But I charge you let each man look into his heart. If therein is a dark hidden blot of shame, for God's sake, make amends now; turn before it is too late as you value peace in this world and salvation in the next.

"It is you who have forced this man upon the People," O'Malley cried. "It is you who have made them turn to one so unworthy because you would not hear their cry. But you have one more chance; you have one more opportunity. The People are forgiving and patient, but you cannot try their endurance too far. You have today your opportunity; it may be your last. Desert the tyrants you now serve. Dethrone your dictators. Pledge anew your allegiance to this Republic. Swear that you will truly serve the People. Remember that, in this beloved land of liberty, the Majority is the only King."

O'Malley ceased speaking, his words reverberating *through the hall like the roll of a drum. For a moment there was silence; then came the explosion of long pent*

emotions. It was the annihilating second shock following Fernald's failure. But the tragic interval had served to divert the force of the blast. For the moment there were cries for neither Heyward nor Holman. The galleries in crashing dissonance shouted O'Malley's name.

With difficulty the District Attorney made his way from the platform. Men surrounded him to grasp his hand. He progressed slowly through cheering, eulogistic crowds to his seat with the New York delegation.

O'Malley had scarcely resumed his place when there began that stampede which will never be forgotten. Delegates broke their state standards in the effort to pull them from the floor and, carrying the lettered banners aloft, massed round the standard of New York. From all parts of the hall they came shouting and waving the colors. The standard of the state of Washington was borne from a remote corner. Half-way on their journey the Western delegates met other delegates bearing the standard of Alabama. They joined forces and others fell in with the march. Round the hall they went singing "My Country 'tis of Thee," their swelling chorus swallowing up every sound, until, at last, like homing pigeons, fluttering above the dove-cote, they circled the other standards and added their own to those that were already massed about New York, paying tribute to O'Malley's triumph. O'Malley, pale, but with vigor undiminished, stood on his chair.

"As a symbol of victory over a common and dangerous foe, New York accepts your homage," he cried, "but not as a personal tribute. The nominations are not over. The man we must name today is Abner J. Heyward, of Ohio."

In spite of McQuade, in spite of delegates bought and paid for, O'Malley was making the most of the desperate chance to defeat Holman. There were those who, in response to his bidding, took up the cry for Heyward, but above their cries rose the call for Emmet O'Malley.

The delegation from Ohio, whatever its motive, personal or impersonal, patriotic or merely political, added its standard to the others and a cheer, mightier than those that had gone before, greeted the action. Eight strong men surrounded O'Malley and, lifting him upon their shoulders, began a triumphal march round the hall, followed by rejoicing delegates, carrying banners, waving flags and singing.

Above this procession the galleries were in a state of delirious excitement. Women waved parasols and handkerchiefs, men brandished canes and umbrellas; hats were thrown in air. Every spectator was on his feet keeping time to the rhythm of the singing, and cheering madly. The waves of sound rolled over each other, crashing with the alternating deep and high roar of breakers. The building seemed to sway; it was as if the walls were being pushed outward by the swelling volume of that tremendous chorus. Men in frenzy laughed and hugged each other and women cried from sheer excitement.

Standing on their tables, drinking in every detail of the scene were Redmond and Riefsnider and the other reporters who, long ago, had abandoned their efforts to write.

"It's Holman's funeral march!" shouted Riefsnider in Redmond's ear, forming a trumpet with his hands.

"It's the real Voice of the People," cried Redmond, his dark face aflame with excitement.

The figure of a woman in one of the upper boxes, waving frantically a hat with long white plumes, caught Redmond's eye. He grasped Riefsnider's arm and pointed to the picturesque figure. As they watched, the hat slipped from the woman's grasp and, cushioned by the air, floated slantingly downward. Slowly it drifted until at last it fell upon the marching men who bore O'Malley on their shoulders. In an instant the feathers *were torn away* and placed in the hands of those nearest

the District Attorney. As a symbol they waved the plumes in air while from the inspired band came the strains of "Yankee Doodle."

Yankee Doodle came to town
Riding on a pony,
Stuck a feather in his hat—

The crowd took up the refrain and sang it over and over.

Yankee Doodle, doodle, doo;
Yankee Doodle dandy.

Only dimly could the thousands who sang see the goal of those marching men below, but they no longer doubted that the end would be the end they most desired; neither the unscrupulous advancement of the few nor the enthronement of one man, but the greatest good of the greatest number, the only goal of a true democracy.

CHAPTER XXXIV

WORMWOOD

Fernald staggered from the convention hall, reeling into the afternoon sunshine. The shouting of the delegates, the curses of the galleries, the infernal uproar rang in his ears. Before his blurred vision hands still rose above hideously contorted faces and stretched hungrily toward him to pull him down. The crash of his failure beat against his brain with sickening concussion. He had fallen suddenly from the pinnacle of his dearest victory to the depths of defeat and he knew not how.

Fernald went shuffling onward unsteadily, heedless of where his steps led him. Those who got out of his way saw a bent man with gray, furrowed face.

"Drunk," said one.

"Crazy," asserted another.

"The sun, perhaps," suggested a third, more kindly.

But Fernald did not hear them. He heard nothing, except the tumult of demoniacal jeers. He saw nothing, except that mass of mocking faces and the outstretched, murderous hands. The din within his brain was driving him mad, if he were not mad already. He must have relief somehow, somewhere.

There had been a time when, as a student in Paris, he had sought oblivion, and had found it in absinthe. He had then drunk of the poison until his brain was paralyzed and he had gained the blessedness of dreamless sleep. The memory of that time had been horrible to him ever since but now he welcomed the thought as a desperately wounded man welcomes the arrival of the surgeon.

Fernald staggered into a saloon. Beyond the bar-room he saw another room shadowy and cool, where there were polished tables and leather chairs, and, shuffling past two or three men at the bar, he discovered that the inner room was vacant. Sinking into a chair, he rested his head on his hand and was so sunk in gloom that he did not raise his eyes when a white-aproned bartender appeared at his side.

"Absinthe," Fernald ordered. "Bring the bottle and some water."

To Fernald it was an age before the man returned but, at last he appeared and placed the glasses, the bottle of absinthe, a pitcher of water and some ice on the table. With a curious glance at his customer the man left the room. Fernald poured the green liqueur into a tall glass and dropped the water into it slowly, watching the green turn first gray and then to opalescent yellow. With hands that trembled he seized the glass and drank deeply. The taste sickened him. He had not touched absinthe since those white nights in Paris when his tortured soul had sought and found rest. But, even as he shuddered, Fernald felt the warmth of the narcotic stealing over him. He filled his glass again in the same measured manner and again drained it.

The hideous noises still pounded in his ears but, now, he could endure them. He could defy those greedy, grasping hands. Again he drank deeply. The chill that had blighted his life was yielding to a revivifying glow. He would return to the convention hall and taunt those human fiends to do their worst. He could battle against them all single-handed; if over-powered, he could endure any torments they might devise. But, no, they could not overpower him; he could defeat them all. Slaves of slave-drivers, fawning curs, he would yet make them grovel at his feet and lick his hand. They had trapped him when he was without suspicion; he had fallen a victim to his own trust, abused by these petty hypocrites;

he would return to the convention hall now, without delay, after one more stimulating drink of this precious drug, and beat the caviling cowards into subjection.

The afternoon wore on into early twilight and still Fernald lingered. When at last, he walked out into the street, erect and with buoyant step, the first arc-lights were shining. His soul was uplifted. His defeat and failure were trivial things that, with lofty spirit, he had put aside. His heart was singing. It was the old, old song: the Song of the People. He looked into the happy faces of those who passed him. How good it was to be near them; he shared their joys; he was glad to hear their laughter. For these were the Honest People of the world. Somewhere there might be hidden wickedness and envy and greed, but not among these smiling men and women and boys and girls, bound homeward, content with that rich content of labor done. He could have grasped their hands; he longed to tell them that they had found the great secret for which all men sought: the secret of happiness. The rough salutations of the men, accosting each other on their way home was as music to him. The laughing voices of the girls was as the harmony of the stars. How uplifting it was to rub shoulders with these Honest People! Fernald stood at the steps leading to the Elevated road. His face alight, his eyes brilliant with sympathy, he watched the throng sweeping by him, upward and still upward—ever upward: this, he told himself, was their glorious destiny.

How long Fernald stood there he did not know but the blue of the night deepened to black; lights grew blurred; the crowds thinned, and he became aware of a mortal weariness. Across the street he saw the swinging doors of hope and entered. When again he passed through the doors and out into the night the scene had changed completely. It was dark, as dark as a jungle. The street was a deep ravine, hidden from the moon and stars. But the darkness was pleasant and the warm,

dank breath of the place soothing. Far ahead were many lights; they might have marked the entrance to a fairyland. When he drew closer he saw that the lights illuminated a theater and, even as he watched, the doors swung open and again he was among happy, smiling faces. But this was not the work-a-day world. He watched them hurrying by him: the women fragile in their delicate loveliness, dazzling in silks and satins and jewels; the men by their side tall, stalwart and handsome, in immaculate raiment. These were the Beautiful People of the world: the fairy creatures who dance only at night. The laughter of the women was like bells in the heart of a wood; their smiles as beautiful as flowers. Surely they were escaped from grottoes where ferns grew high and where the glow-worm lighted the revels. Stentorian voices calling for carriages were the commands of ring-masters in this fairy circus. It was all a show, a pantomime, to delight the eye. Fernald could have applauded for joy as he watched, but, before he was aware, the laughing faces had swept by, the lights were extinguished and he was left alone. His beautiful People were gone.

Fernald walked the streets. Aimlessly he stumbled into dark corners and out into the light again. Those he met were no longer the same: they were neither the Honest People nor the Beautiful People. Their voices rang with false laughter; the cheeks and lips of the women were aflame with artificial fire; on their fingers were tawdry, lusterless rings. The glances of the men were furtive; their smiles were caricatures that spread over thick lips and bleared eyes. They went their way together, the men with sodden faces and the women with the masks, leaving fetid smoke-filled rooms and scurrying into hidden places. They were the Painted People, the Unreal People of the world. Fernald shuddered. His heart grew sick and faint. The voices in his ears were becoming distinct again. They must be silenced.

When Fernald resumed his walk the streets were empty. His own footsteps sounded loud and clear, echoing as he went, he knew not where, drawn by a hand he could not see. With head bent, his eyes staring glassily at the pavement, he wandered along the deserted thoroughfares, occasionally passing a hurrying pedestrian or attracting the suspicious glance of a policeman.

The Voices of Fernald's ears had been stifled but he knew they would return and his mind was crowded with forbidden thoughts. In the waters of the river he could find a sure oblivion; the Voices could not follow him beyond—nothingness. He walked until the sky grew bluer, the stars faded, street lights grew pale and sickly and dawn lifted the great buildings from their shadows. And again there were people near him but now their faces were hideous. Old women, with matted gray hair, emerged from nowhere and, mumbling, shuffled by him threateningly. Men with distorted features peered into his face. Fernald could see their gnarled, misshapen hands. Some of them had but one eye. The women were unkempt hags, muttering curses as they sought rags or food or treasure in the gutters among the refuse. They hobbled by, some on crutches, some bent so that they seemed to crawl.

They were without expression like monstrous vermin. They came from holes in the ground as the early, slimy creatures freed themselves from the ooze in the world's first dawn. They were the People of the Under-world: the Ghost People who must hasten away before the sunrise.

Fernald placed a hand over his eyes to shut out their faces. He seemed to be in a region of pitfalls where these monsters were waiting to spring upon him should he stumble. He kept his gaze averted from them as he passed along.

Suddenly the street grew weirdly familiar. He looked up and saw the City Hall; then his eyes turned toward

the *Epoch* office. The bulletin boards stared down at him. Without premeditation, his own volition apparently playing no part in his actions, Fernald entered the building and climbed the steps leading to the editorial offices. He passed through the deserted city room. It was as if the tenants had died long since and their possessions had been left undisturbed. It seemed impossible that this dead room should ever re-awaken to life and energy. It was too early for those who prepared the room for the day and the light fell upon disordered desks and chairs and a floor littered with paper. Fernald passed on into his own provisional office and thence into the room he had so long occupied. It was still his old room, but scarred with the evidences of Mendell's work. Fernald turned away from it and tried the door leading into Holman's inner office. It opened and he entered.

At his desk sat Holman, waiting for him.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE RECKONING

Upon Holman's face deeply graven were the marks of that long night he had gone through alone, looking deep into his soul. His eyes were bloodshot; his thick, black hair unkempt; his skin drawn and white as if the blood had left it.

No man had dared venture an offer to keep him company in his dark hour of defeat. When victory was snatched so suddenly, so inexplicably from his grasp those who had been with him had withdrawn from his presence, terrified by the spectacle of his silent, awful wrath. He had uttered no word. Twice he had read through Reifsnider's report of what had happened in the convention; more than twice he had gone over Mendell's hysterical telegrams. Neither man doubted for a moment that Fernald's fatal error had been due to some mental slip, some weakness that held in it the symptom of collapse. But Holman refused to accept their judgment. Once only did he give utterance to the thought that was whirring in his brain.

"If he has sold me out," he muttered, "by God, I'll kill him!"

No one dared go near him as he sat there in his office, alone. The afternoon wore into twilight, twilight into dark and midnight came and the hour when the last paper was put to press but still Holman sat there alone.

In those long hours he saw the scroll of his life unroll and as he looked upon all that he had done, Doubt crept like a dismal specter into his mind and struck terror to his soul. Was ambition, the conqueror's lust for power, after all an evil thing, whose wages, like the wages of sin, was

death? Was there some law above all human laws that brought retribution to him who fought against men and women and children for himself alone? Was there some hand outstretched to help the helpless and to drag men down from the high places they had reached over other men's souls? He thought of the powerful men in history whose splendor had fascinated him, whose conquest had inspired him, whose glory on earth had given to him an ideal—Alexander, disreputably dead in his youth; Cæsar killed by those who feared him; Nero, despised in life, execrated in death; Louis, the sun-god, followed to his unremembered grave by tears of joy; Napoleon and the last days of exile when all that he had been was as nothing, when the splendor had vanished and only the grief and suffering he had caused was remembered. Were they all failures in the end? Was there a truer, higher standard of success? Was the glory of a man's might a worthless thing in comparison to the glory of his soul?

Holman thought of his hard struggle for success. He remembered the beginning when every man's hand seemed to be turned against him. He had fought in the only way he knew with the weapons a rough life had given into his grasp. Had it all been wrong? He debated the dark questions defeat brought home to him. He saw Zaidee as he had first known her. He remembered her as a child. He recalled the impetuous kisses with which she had offered her child's worship. He saw her growing into womanhood, beautiful and wilful but docile in her love for him. Would it have been better for her if he had died?

And more bitter than all else came the clear remembrance of Harriet Stowers. He saw before him in that awful dream the sad, sweet face of the woman he had forever lost. All that he might have been with the star of her pure soul to guide him revealed itself to his vision, and he had flung it away for a worthless thing,

and even that had been snatched from him. It was a loss too great to bear, a defeat too overwhelming to oppose. Disaster crushed him; he could no longer stand erect. Death alone remained—death when all that made life sweet had been so near. So near—that was the agony of it! To have cast all else aside for the power he coveted and, at last, to be robbed of it by the error of a fool—fool or craven.

His rage flared up again. Before that final step was taken which should mark the end he would face Fernald. If treachery showed behind a lowered eyelid he would send the man to perdition with him. Throughout the night he had waited knowing Fernald would come. Wherever he had gone, wherever he might be, the fate that had dragged him down would lead the man's footsteps there. He sat with eyes fastened on the door and when he saw the handle turn he knew Fernald had come.

Holman silently watched the man enter. As pitiless as an executioner he looked at Fernald. He saw the glassy eyes, the ivory pallor of the skin, the blue veins in the forehead. Fernald walked, as somnambulists walk, to a chair and sank on it, staring helplessly before him, the picture of defeat, crushing, annihilating defeat.

"So it's you! You've come back!" Holman's voice quivered with scorn. The man before him did not answer and Holman's lips drew thin across his teeth.

"Speak up, damn you!" he snarled. "What have you to say?"

Fernald raised his eyes hopelessly. "Say?" he repeated, his voice far away and hollow. "There is nothing to say. I must be mad."

"Nothing to say!" Holman roared it at him. "By God! you shall have something to say. You were put up to it! You sold me out! You tricked me out of the nomination; *you!*"

Fernald stared at him dumbly.

"Say something," cried Holman, white with rage.

"You've cheated me out of the presidency, but," and he hurled an oath at Fernald, "it will be dear treachery for you. Speak up quickly if you have anything to say, for, by God, you have been a traitor for the last time."

Holman took suddenly from his pocket a revolver, long and blue-black, and levelled it at Fernald's head. There came dimly to the tortured mind of the editorial writer that this moment was the last. He rose and stood stiffly as men stand when they are placed against a wall to be shot. If his life must pay the forfeit for his great mistake, he was willing the sacrifice should be made. The penalty was no more than he should pay. Fernald faced Holman, content that this should be the end.

But, on the brink of abysmal ruin, that self-control which had always been David Holman's staunchest characteristic, stretched forth a saving hand and dragged him back from destruction.

Slowly his mastery over his emotions reasserted itself, his arm fell and he placed the weapon on his desk. But his wrath and his desire to be avenged had not been subdued. He rose and walked with deliberation to where Fernald stood, dazed and motionless. Holman peered into his face, searching for some sign of treachery that should nerve his arm.

"No, you are not worthy of it," he declared, each word sounding to Fernald's dulled ear low and indistinct like the muffled notes of a submerged bell. "To shoot you down like the cur you are or to die with you would give you too much honor. You are not worth killing."

Holman approached a step nearer.

"Oh, you unbelievable fool!" he cried, and struck the man with all his strength, full in the face.

Fernald reeled dizzily. He swayed against a chair. It toppled over. For a moment it seemed that he must fall, but, with an effort, he caught himself, leaning against the wall. He buried his face in his hands to steady his whirling brain. Then the pain of the blow quickened him.

With a cry of rage he leaped, like a wounded beast, at Holman's throat.

Holman was taken completely by surprise. He struck out wildly but the blows were ineffective. Fernald's long, sinewy fingers coiled round his throat. All the old athlete, sacrificed in his devoted pursuit of a philosophy, was born again in Fernald's mighty frame as he matched himself against the man who had struck him. Enraged by pain and passion and half-mad from the green serpent that still hissed in his brain, even Holman, giant though he was, with all his physical powers carefully nourished, was no match for him. Battling with a strength not his own, Fernald forced his adversary backward. Holman fought wildly. His fists fell fast and hard on Fernald's face but the grasp on his throat did not relax. It cut into the tendons of his neck, until the swollen cords stood out between and above the long, lithe fingers of the demon he had aroused. He was choking, suffocating. The blood surged through Holman's brain; it pounded at his temples; it suffused his eyes until he could no longer see the demoniacal face six inches from his own. The outlines were blurred; only the eyes were apparent to his vision, two coals of incandescent fire that burned through the sulphurous mist enveloping him. His eyeballs were starting from their sockets; red and glazed they bulged from his face. Struggle as he might, this unsuspected maniac was forcing him back, back to the wall, to pin him there, as the garrote pins its victim and to strangle him to death.

Holman felt his senses reel; he was falling backward to that wall where life would be crushed out of him. Even now he could hear the horrid grinding of those bony fingers as they closed tighter and tighter. He gasped for breath and tore at the hands that held him, digging his nails deep into the flesh, but the grip upon his throat did not loosen. He tried to scream, to call for aid, but only inarticulate sounds bubbled from his

swollen lips. There was no one to help him. With his swooning consciousness Holman remembered that at that hour the office was deserted. His will power was failing; his purpose to resist became weak and uncertain. All that was real was a sickening sense of falling. His foot struck against something hard; it was the wall where he would be strangled to death. His head crashed against a picture. The shattered glass fell upon him. The frame dropped with a din to the floor. It was the François Boucher he had loved so well. His feet trampled upon it.

Over Holman's face, round his ears, down his neck the blood streamed from the gashes in his scalp made by the broken glass of the picture. It was his salvation, for the flow of blood revived him. With a foot braced against the wall he threw his weight upon Fernald and bore him back. In the effort to prevent a fall the hands left for a moment their cruel hold. With a cry of relief Holman sprang forward but Fernald was at him again.

Weakened by his long struggle but animated by the realization of the peril he faced, Holman fought savagely. He caught hold of Fernald's left arm and clung to it, making a desperate effort to seize the right hand that darted like a serpent at his throat, the long tongue-like fingers outstretched to take his life. He knew that he could not shake off that grasp a second time. As they struggled Holman saw, lying on his desk, the revolver he had placed there. He gave a quick cry of triumphant joy and, forgetting all else, sprang forward to get possession of the weapon. But Fernald's fury was as quick and his hands were once more clasped round Holman's throat. Blindly Holman tried to seize the revolver. His fingers touched it but his head was forced back. He felt his hand strike the weapon and it fell heavily to the floor.

Again those long fingers dug deeply into Holman's flesh. Again he was unable to breathe and the room

swam. He braced himself against the desk. Groping for support his right hand caught something that was heavy and long like a knife. It was the bronze paper-cutter with the ivory face of the little fisher-boy on the handle.

With all the strength that remained in him, Holman turned and struck at Fernald with the weapon. The blade glanced on Fernald's forehead above the temple, tore open the skin and buried itself in his shoulder. Stolidly, without a groan, as an ox is felled, Fernald sank to the floor and lay huddled at Holman's feet, motionless.

Holman stood looking uncomprehendingly at the inert form of his antagonist. It was as if he did not see the room or Fernald or the pool of blood forming slowly on the rug by Fernald's head. His last energy expended in dealing the blow that had saved his life, Holman leaned against the desk, his heart throbbing, his head seeming about to burst, his breath coming slowly and with difficulty. For many seconds he stood there, removed from his surroundings. Then, as if brought back to himself and his normal life by that interval of solitude, he knelt by Fernald and raised his head. But Fernald showed no sign of life.

"My God, Fernald," Holman cried. "It can't be; I haven't killed you!"

He drew the weapon from Fernald's shoulder and threw it upon the floor. The wistful face of the little fisher-boy, broken from its fastenings, rolled out and hid itself beneath Holman's desk.

Fernald opened his eyes. He smiled wanly as Holman wiped away the blood from his face.

"What is it?" asked the wounded man. "What has happened?"

Holman lifted him to a chair. Carefully, almost tenderly, he removed the clothing that concealed the wound in Fernald's shoulder. The cut gaped darkly but a

superficial examination convinced Holman that it was not serious.

"Thank God!" he murmured reverently, "you are not badly hurt!"

Fernald smiled again. "It is nothing," he said weakly, "Nothing. How was it? And you; your face is covered with blood."

Slowly the scenes he had passed through resolved themselves into shape from the blank darkness of his memory. As he came nearer to a vision of the truth his eyes widened in horror. All the teaching of his life stood aghast at the picture now forming only too clearly. He summed up his revulsion of feeling in an inarticulate groan.

"May God help us, David Holman," he prayed. "What were we about to do!"

Holman could not meet the reproachful gaze. He left Fernald's side and, walking unsteadily to his desk, sank wearily in a chair. Then slowly he turned upon the dreamer contrite eyes filled with tears. The mastery over his emotions which had ever been to Holman at once a source of strength and weakness deserted him now and, throwing himself forward upon his desk, his head upon his arms, he wept, abandoning all restraint, as weep little children who, having set their hearts upon that which their small world holds most dear, find themselves suddenly denied. And perhaps, through the storm of remorse and doubt and disappointment that swept his tortured soul he saw the dawning of a brighter, better day. Who knows?

THE END



THE HON. PETER STIRLING

And What People Thought of Him

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